Image, Words, Magic:

A Case Study of the Influence of Images on the Use of Amulets from Egypt and Mesopotamia

Annerié Fritz

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Department of Ancient Studies

Supervisor: Professor Izak Cornelius

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Declaration

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Abstract:

This thesis intends to examine to what degree the use of images on certain objects may have influenced the way in which such artefacts had been used. To this end this thesis utilizes ancient amulets from both Egypt and Mesopotamia as case studies. The iconographic method as adapted by Bonfiglio (2016) is applied throughout. This method allows for a closer examination not only of the amulets, but of the image-function relationship and the visual awareness behind the use of images as well. The corpus of this thesis consists of eight amulets of varying types, functions and origin, with supporting examples provided as additional figures in the body of the text. This allows for the focus of the study to remain with images and their role with regards to the *use* of these objects rather than the objects themselves. The study concludes that while the interpretation of the image as the determinative factor in the use of the amulet may be valid, the eventual ambiguity as to the validity of this interpretation as well as its opposite, in equal measure, may require further study in order to reach a definitive conclusion.

Opsomming:

Die doel van hierdie tesis is om ondersoek in te stel na die mate van invloed wat die beeldmateriaal moontlik op die gebruik van sekere artefakte kan hê. In hierdie tesis word amulette van Egipte en Mesopotamië as gevallestudies gebruik. Die ikonografiese metode soos aangepas deur Bonfiglio (2016) word in die studie as metode gebruik. Hierdie metode laat ‘n meer indiepte ondersoek van die objekte toe, die verhouding tussen die beeld en die funksie van die amulette, sowel as die vlak van doelbewuste gebruik van die beeld. Die korpus van die studie bestaan uit agt amulette van verskeie tipes, funksies en oorsprong. Ondersteunende voorbeelde word afsonderlik in die teks verskaf. Dit verseker dat die fokus van die studie by die beeld bly en die invloed op die *gebruik* van die amulette eerder as die amulette self. Die gevolgtrekking van die studie bespreek die grondigheid van die interpretasie dat die beeld bepaal hoe die artefakte gebruik is, maar lig uit dat die teenoorgestelde interpretasie ook moontlik is en dat daar meer ondersoek ingestel moet word om tot ‘n meer beslisde gevolgtrekking te kom.

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To my mother;
A patient listener whose ability to reason without a foundation of relevant knowledge has saved my sanity time and again.

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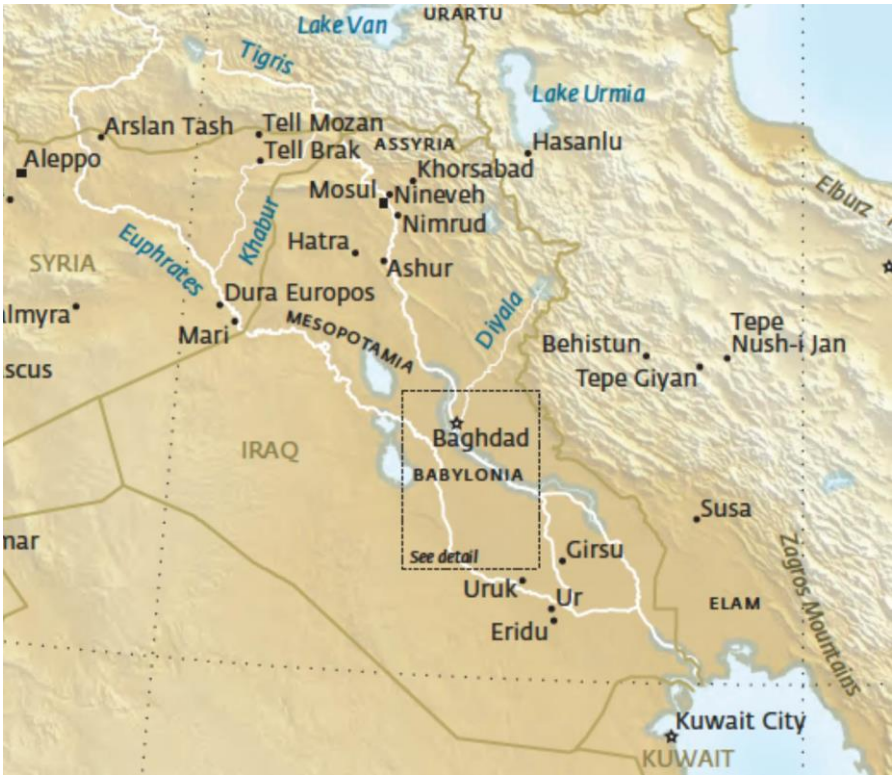

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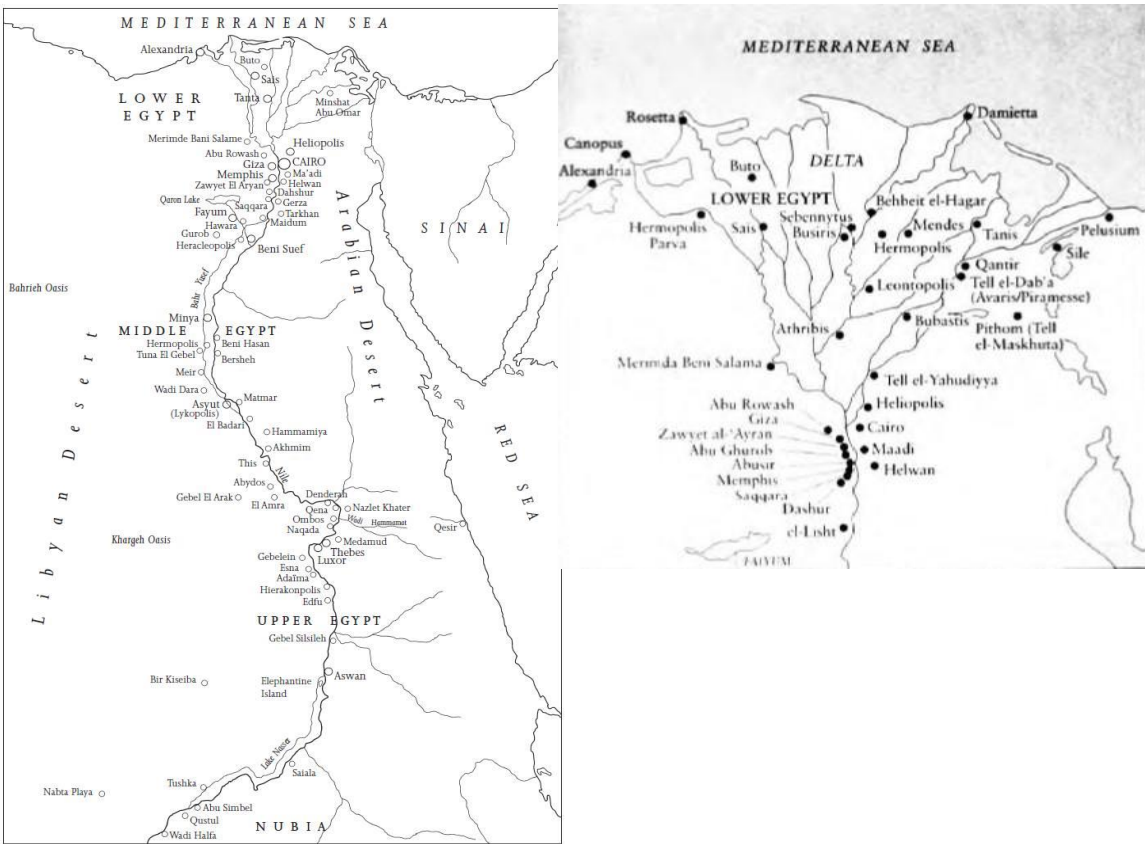

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PART I: Context and Theory

1. Introduction: Background and Historical Context

> One of the stumbling blocks in the study of religion in ancient [civilisations] is that of the theoretical approach to magic.
> (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 3)

Amulets and the belief in amuletic magic has been a part of human history for thousands of years. Amulets often serve as some of the oldest physical representatives of the practice of magic. Though the concept of magic encompasses much more than amulets, these objects have always been "a natural element of everyday life and faith" (Müller-Winkler 1987: 15). Examples of their use can be found in cultures all across the world and the earliest cases often predate civilisation itself. Amulets also spread from one culture to another. A case in point is, ancient Egyptian amulets spread across the entire Mediterranean at a very early stage and were particularly popular in the Levant (Herrmann 2016: 1).

Writing in Mesopotamia first began appearing roughly around 3500-3200 BCE (Woods 2010b: 34) and in Egypt at about 3320 BCE (MacArthur 2010: 119). The earliest documented appearance of stamp and cylinder seals in Mesopotamia (in this case used as an example of amuletic-based magic (Collon 1987: 108 &113)) is generally from the seventh and fourth millennium BCE respectively (Topçuoğlu 2010: 29). Evidence of the use of amulets in Predynastic Egypt (5500-2972 BCE) has also been found; such as the hippopotamus necklace from Badari (**Fig. 5**) which dates back to ca. 4500 BCE (Malek 1999: 38). Therefore, the practice of 'magic', in perhaps its oldest form, falls well into the late pre-historic era (Woods 2010a: 15); possibly even earlier.

Figure 5: Hippopotamus necklace from Badari, ca. 4500-4000 BCE (Malek 1999: 38).

Though magic had undoubtedly shaped much of the ancient world in the way of religion, medicine, protection and daily problem solving/intervention[1], as a field of study it has often found itself relegated to the margins of academic inquiry – always analysed within the broader context of ancient life rather than as an existing force in its own right (Pinch 2010: 9). In spite of multiple self-admonishments on the subject of coming to understand ancient peoples on their own terms[2], it ever seems to be as much the nature of the pragmatic scholar

[1] See Pinch (2010: 9) and Black & Green (1992: 124-128).
[2] See van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999: 5); Bottéro (2001: 2); Uehlinger (2003: 224-225) as quoted by Bonfiglio (2016: 117); Stiebing (2009: 4) and Teeter (2011: 3).

to suppress an urge to cringe at the mention of the supernatural (Ritner 1993: 4), as it was the nature of the "irrational" ancient individual to believe and rely devoutly on the same force (Pinch 2010: 9). Thus, in the past, magic as a subject has often been the proverbial academic 'hot-potato'.

However, the lack of (1) a cohesive academic understanding of the term (to be discussed in the following chapter) and (2) a consistent approach to the subject matter (Ritner 1993: 1, 4), does not justify leaping over this particular part of cultural/religious debates. Especially since, as previously mentioned, research in Egyptology has indicated that the applied practice of magic in the shape of amulets (Andrews 1994: 6), for instance, and as an *inherent cultural phenomenon* had already been present by the fourth millennium BCE (Pinch 2010: 9); something that is clearly also true of Mesopotamia (Moortgat 1969: 1).

In the past century or so various interpretive methods or approaches with regard to this subject have been put forth in an attempt to find one that may serve as an encompassing method for all the relevant fields of study (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 3). This includes the older, outdated works of Frazer, Budge, Malinowski etc. It is still a work in progress.

Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann (1999:4-11), in their paper on theoretical perspectives on magic and its application to Mesopotamia, highlighted four of the approaches most often used by scholars; this has been summarised for convenience in **Table 1: Theoretical Approaches to Magic**. They likewise present a separate tentative perspective as a theoretical alternative to the four described below (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 11-18). This approach argues the value of interpreting the practice of/or appearance of magic in the life of ancient peoples as a way of "conceptualising and effecting control" (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 11). This resonates strongly with Peterson's (1999) work on the development of certain images in mythological thought systems when confronted by the presence of the 'known' and 'unknown' in daily life and the limitations of people's control over their immediate domains of experience. In the study of amuletic-based magic, as is the focus of this thesis, this will be especially relevant. A discussion on this point is to follow in **Chapter 2: The Image and the Mind**.

In each of the aforementioned theoretical approaches, including the fifth, the definitions/views of magic are crucial. It underpins the academic theoretical and cultural perspectives with which the relevant data of any study will be interpreted. As this thesis aims to present a case-study on the use of amulets from Mesopotamia and Egypt, any definition of 'magic' or 'amulet' used would naturally have to include in its understanding the perspectives of both cultures.

This thesis will therefore first proceed by outlining the principles under which each of these two terms should be understood within the context of this study: followed by the

research problem and aim, hypothesis and finally the methodology. Next will be discussed the construction of the theoretical perspectives and analytical formulations that will be used to critically analyse the role of images on the selected amuletic corpus in chapters 3, 4 and 5, followed by a brief reflection on the implementation of amuletic magic as ways of effecting control in chapter 6. Within the final chapter will be evaluated the findings and limitations of the research contained herein as well as recommendations for further studies.

Approach:	**The Descriptive Definitional Position:**	**The Anthropological Position:**	**The Middle Eastern/European Magical Tradition:**	**The Comparative and Historical Position:**
Definition of 'Magic':	• Term 'magic' taken as self-evident. • E.g. curses, incantations, spells, divination, attempts at human interaction with 'other' beings ('demons'), amulets, talismans, charms, cures involving specific *materia medica*.	• Definition of 'magic' is general so as to be able to apply the term to all broadly relevant phenomena that share similar features under different names or forms across various cultures.	• Understanding of 'magic' is bound to the associated interpretation of the European ethnocentric view of the "*μαγεία*"/ magician, as among others, religious specialists.	• An applicable definition of the term 'magic' can be derived from a comparative study of cultures that share enough similarities to have common approaches to its practice.
Application:	• Approach is exploratory rather than interpretative or analytical. • Used to label genres of texts in which practices are referred to/ implied as 'magical'. • In Assyriology: methods of this approach revolve around texts and their translations.	• Approach hinges on the duel interpretative positions of the 'emic' and 'etic' perspectives; i.e. the outsider and/ or local conceptual views. • Studies involve the use of multiple cultures at the same time in the context of adaptable methodological hypotheses.	• Approach views Mesopotamian 'magic' as one of the very few original forms of 'magic'. • Cultural historical theoretical approach to the concept is influenced by the historical perspectives of Hellenism and Late Antiquity.	• Approach aims to compare only cultures that are arguably comparable by having something in common such as a shared geographical location or historical period, use related languages or the same productive technologies.
Limitations:	• Dramatically limits the scope for explanation. • Makes any study on the subject vulnerable to projected idealisms from non-related cultures and historical contexts.	• Method sacrifices historical specificity of individual cultures for an aggregate discussion. • Redefines definition of concept according to academic needs.	• Interpretations are misconstrued due to imposed non-related cultural idealisms. • Method is outdated in comparison to the information now available.	• Information used for studies relies heavily on the subjective experiences of the ancient peoples involved. • Is strongly dependant on the amount of data that is available.

Table 1: Theoretical Approaches to Magic as discussed by van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999: 4-11).

1.1. Research Problem and Definitions

1.1.1. Definitions

The Oxford English Dictionary (2010: 452) defines magic as "mysterious or supernatural forces [used] to make something happen", from the Greek *magikē tekhnē* meaning "art of a magus". It then continues by defining a 'magus' as "a priest of ancient Persia" or "a sorcerer" (OED 2010: 453). This is not a very inclusive understanding of the term, but somewhat of a European and ethnocentric based description. The very word 'magic' contains all the cultural ideas and principles characteristic of its "foreign" linguistic make-up (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 8). While some scholars have attempted to deny or ignore the existence of magic in ancient societies, others have worked towards an acknowledged separation of magic and religion, denouncing the practice of the former as "blasphemous" while holding the latter as expressions of "piety" (Ritner 2001: 321).

Graf (2002: 94) wrote that "[the] basis of magic is the [communication] between human and superhuman beings […] [which] is also indispensable for the function of prayer". Magic and religion were closely associated with little difference regarding rituals and practice (David 2003: 169). To ancient people, it was a force inherently part of the divine and little distinction was made, for example, in Egyptian writing between deities and the concept 'magic' (Ritner 1993: 16). It was seen as a neutral force which could be employed for either good or bad ends and was therefore not considered something 'evil' in and of itself (Black & Green 1992: 124-125). As an ever present force in the created world, magic was the prerogative of the divine and could be used by humans through 'sympathetic' means (Wilkinson 1994: 7) in order to help guard against, drive away or overcome 'evil' in all its supernatural and mundane forms[3]. Even the divinities used magical objects such as amulets (van Buren 1945b: 20) to secure their safety, a good example of which can be found in the *Gilgamesh Epic*:

> 161 The gods smelled the savour,
> 162 the gods smelled the sweet savour,
> 163 the gods gathered like flies around the sacrifice.
> 164 As soon as Belet-ili arrived,
> 165 she lifted aloft the great flies that Anu had made when he wooed (her):
> 166 "O gods, let these be lapis lazuli (beads) around my neck,
> 167 so that I remember these days and never forget them!"
>
> (George 2003: 712-715).

[3] See Black & Green (1992: 125); Pinch (2010: 14-17) and Teeter (2011: 115).

Both in Egypt and Mesopotamia there were many words that could essentially be translated broadly into 'magic'. In ancient Egyptian, the word most often referred to in the context of magic is *heka*/*hekau* (Pinch 2010: 9-12) written as *ḥkꜣ* (Ritner 1993: 15). It was considered to be "one of the forces used by the creator deity to make and maintain the world" (Pinch 2010: 9). As a personified concept *Heka*/*Ḥkꜣ* (Ritner 1993: 15) in his divine state was usually depicted in human form, was associated with the creator deity (especially when the latter held the appearance of a child) and was described as the *ba* of the sun deity (Pinch 2010: 10). "He was the energy which made creation possible or protected the created order from chaos" (Pinch 2010: 10).

Figure 6: (From left to right) Hieroglyphs for *Heka* as a deity and *heka* as magic on the right (Ritner 1993: 15)

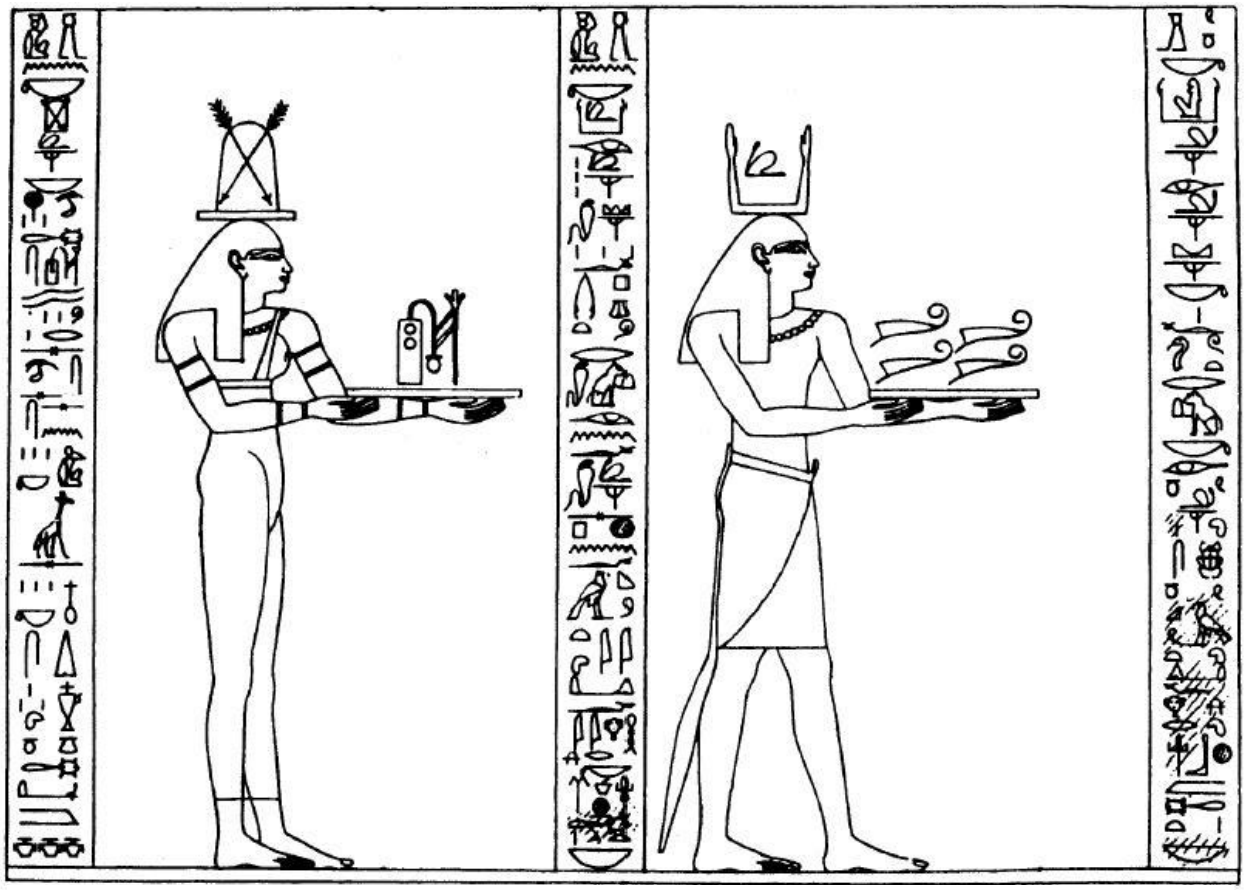

Figure 7: *Heka* and his *ḥmws.t*, from the Outer Wall of the Edfu Pylon (Ritner 1993: 37).

An alternative personification of this concept was the female deity *Weret Hekau* who was usually depicted in cobra form, acted as a foster mother to the king and "was the power immanent in the royal crown" (Pinch 2010: 11). The symbolic use of the cobra became a "characteristic element" of the royal crowns as early as Dynasty I during the reign of King Den and was derived from this Lower Egyptian divine patroness of the King (CiałOwicz

2011: 60). As closely linked as magic was to religion, so tightly bound was religion to state and "political obedience was an important part of an individual's religious duty" (Brewer & Teeter 2007: 102). In Egypt, the gods, lesser supernatural beings, the king, people with special/ abnormal qualities such as dwarves (**Fig. 8**) and even the dead, were all believed to have had their own *heka* (Pinch 2010: 11-12).

Figure 8: Dwarf Figurine from Tell el-Farkha, Second Deposit, Western Kom, ca. 3300-3200 BCE (Teeter 2011: 59).

Lastly, another term in ancient Egyptian often translated into/ associated with magic was *akhu* (Pinch 2010: 12). It was usually the deities and stars, or more specifically, the underworld deities and the blessed dead who used *akhu* and much like *heka*, *akhu* was a neutral force that could be channelled towards either creation or destruction (Pinch 2010: 12).

In ancient Mesopotamia, the exact term in use would likely depend on the culture and language in question and may even be slightly more specific than its Egyptian equivalents. The concept of magic was very closely connected to both medicine and divination, thus particular words were used for particular 'branches' of the practice (Black & Green 1992: 125). Three known words would be *āšipūtu* (exorcism), *bārûtu* (divination) and *asûtu* (medicine)[4]. They also had distinct names for the various magical collections/ texts/ incantations that they kept e.g. *šurpu* ('burning'), to be used when the client does not know how he has offended the deities; *namburbû*, which was used to avert the effect of evil in the future that has been divined; and finally, *maqlû* (likewise meaning 'burning'), which was a nocturnal ritual that was used when someone believed that he/she had been bewitched (Black & Green 1992: 126-127).

While the more logical view of medicine – surgical and herbal for instance – did exist, the common belief was that illness was caused by magic or 'demons' and that the same force was needed to reverse its effects (Black & Green 1992: 125). Therefore, the Mesopotamians differentiated between the specialists who served as physicians called the *asû* and the healer-priests known as the *ashipu* (*āšipu/ āšiptu*)[5]. The *ashipu* priests intervened on behalf of the people in cases where they fell ill either due to the wrath of the divinities or in instances of demonic possession and needed to be exorcised (Bertman 2003: 133). Furthermore, they used magic as part of their regular healing methods along with poultices, decoctions, ointments and enemas (Black & Green 1992: 125).

[4] See van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999: 8) and in order CAD Aii (1968: 435-436), CAD B (1965: 131-133) and CAD Aii (1968: 351-352).
[5] See Black & Green (1992: 125); Bertman (2003: 133) and Rochberg (2004: 93); the latter "*āšiptu*" referring to the priestesses who performed exorcisms CAD Aii (1968: 431).

During the divination ritual it was the additional duty of the *ashipu* priest to assist the diviner by working to "avert the effects of ill portents" (Black & Green 1992: 125). The diviners themselves were called the *bārû*[6] (meaning 'observer/ seer') and their methods of interpretation included lecanomancy, libanomancy (Reiner 1995: 62), reading the entrails of animals – especially the liver[7] – and the use of *amulets* (Annus 2010: 1). At this point it should be noted that recent scholarship has come to argue against the association of divination with magic on the basis of their conceptual differences (Nissinen 2020: 215). However, as amuletic magic was included in the diviner's repertoire (Annus 2010: 1) it was mentioned here.

Though amulets are but one in many ways in which magic had been 'practically' implemented in the ancient world, their use served as a method of protection and communication within various branches of the practice, from medicine, to familial and personal safety, to funerary rites and formal defence[8]. A case in point is how it was often the practice in ancient Mesopotamia to place amuletic plaques in the home where infants and unborn children were, to keep them from being taken or killed by demons, like *Lamaštu* (Bertman 2003: 133).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'amulet' simply as "an ornament or small piece of jewellery worn as protection against evil" (2010: 23). Andrews (1994: 6) writes:

> An amulet, talisman or charm is a personal ornament which, because of its shape, the material from which it is made, or even just its colour, is believed to endow its wearer by magical means with certain powers or capabilities.

Three of the four Egyptian words that are generally translated into 'amulet' come from verbs meaning 'to guard' or 'to protect' (Andrews 1994: 6). These are *mkt*/*mk.t ḥ*ʿ (*meket*), *nht*/*nh.t* (*nehet*) and *sʒ*/ *zƷ* (*'sa*); the fourth word, *wḏʒ*/*wƷḏ* (*wedja*) carries the same sound as the word for "wellbeing"[9]. Terms relating to seals include *ḏb 'tt* (stamp seal), *ḫtm* (ring seal) and *śḏƷ.t* (cylinder seal) (Hallo 1983: 8). Egyptian amulets were often fashioned in the shape of animals, symbols/objects and deities (Müller-Winkler 1987: 20). Some amulets had more than one meaning and therefore, more than one function (Stünkel 2019: online). Others, such as those carved into the shape of specific deities for funerary use, were frequently

[6] See Reiner (1995: 2, 63) and Bertman (2003: 132).
[7] See Reiner (1995: 63) and Guinan (2002: 9).
[8] See Black & Green (1992: 30, 70, 124-128); Andrews (1994: 6); Bertman (2003: 133); Rochberg (2004: 93) and Annus (2010: 1).
[9] See Andrews (1994: 6) and Keel (1995: 266).

meant to invoke specific powers and thus were used with a specific goal in mind (Stünkel 2019: online). For both the living and the dead in Egypt amulets were considered an essential adornment and very often the amulets worn in life could be taken to the grave for continued aid and protection in the Afterlife (Andrews 1994: 6).

The Akkadian word for 'amulet' is *kišādu* (CAD K 1971: 449) (also used as the word for 'seal' (Hallo 1983: 12)) used as in: "*ki-šá-du qaqqad pazūzāni* (stone amulet(s) in the shape of Pazūzu-demon heads); *ina libbi UZU.GÚ-šú-nu ina libbi unqi iktanku* (they sealed it with (a seal) hung around their neck (and) with a ring seal); […] *GÚ.MEŠ ša rēš erši šarri u šēpīt šarri* (four stone amulets for the head and the foot of the king's bed)" (CAD K 1971: 449). Other related terms *kišib* ((seal) Sum.) and *kunukku* (seal/sealed tablet) (Hallo 1983: 7). These examples indicate that Mesopotamian amulets, like those used in Egypt, were a means to a specific end (e.g. the *Lamaštu* amulets (Bertman 2003: 133)), that they were worn on the person or positioned "at the location of the desired magical effect", including graves (Black & Green 1992: 30) and that images played an equally significant role (1992: 78).

Therefore, in light of the information above and the schematic summaries below, the terms 'magic' and 'amulet' should be understood within the context – and for the duration – of this thesis, as follows:

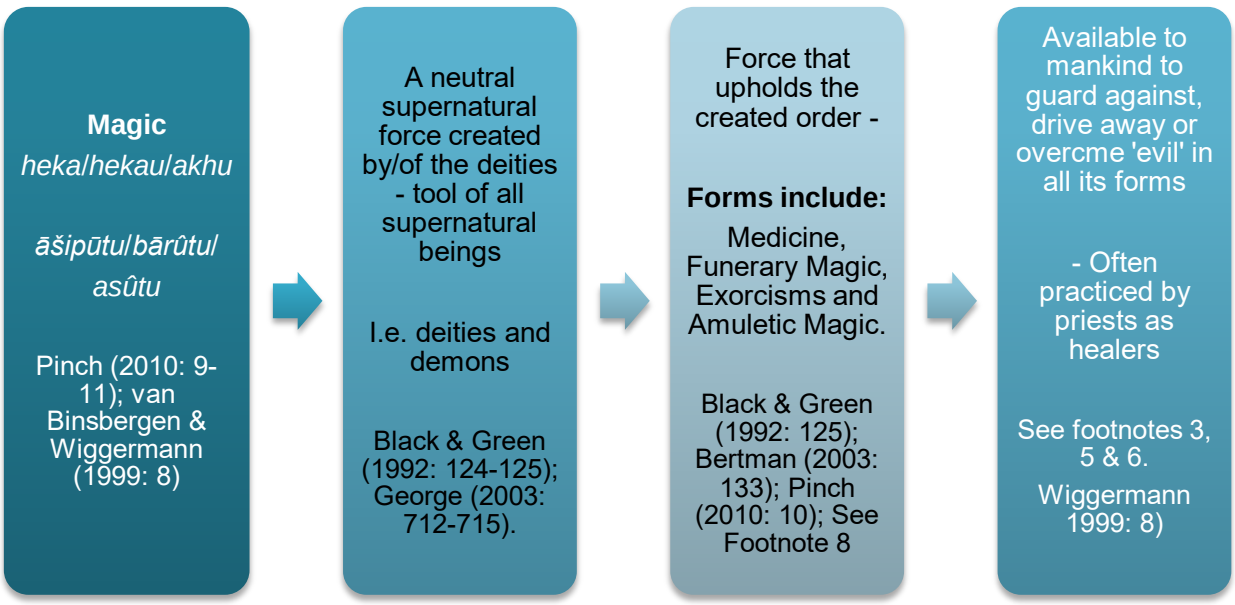

Figure 9: Schematic Summary of the Definition of 'Magic'.

Magic is a neutral supernatural force of **divine origin,** that is simultaneously an intrinsic part of/ tool for all supernatural beings and the primal force that supports the created cosmic

order, which can be used by humans to defend against 'evil' and was often practiced by priests in medicine, exorcisms and funerary rites, commonly combined with **amuletic** magic.

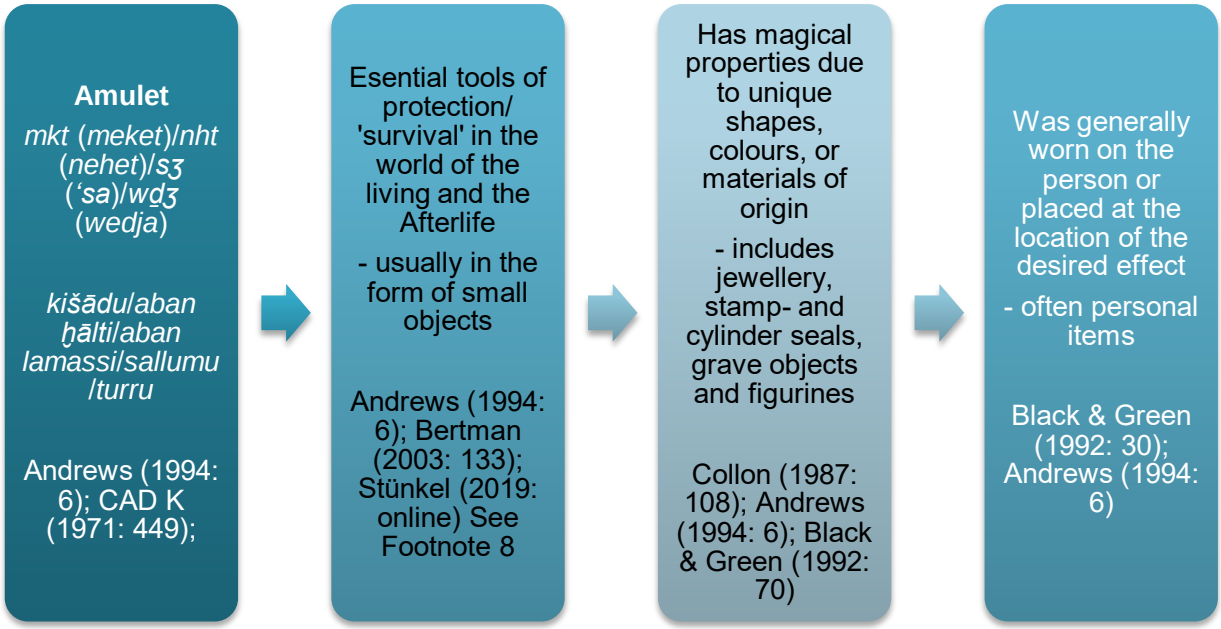

Figure 10: Schematic Summary of the Definition of the word 'Amulet'.

Amulets are small items of unique shape, colour or material that are believed to be endowed with magical properties so as to help protect a person, possession or place from harm in both the living world and the Afterlife, was worn either on the person or placed at the location of the desired effect and could belong to such categories as jewellery, stamp and cylinder seals, grave objects and figurines.

1.1.2. Research Problem, Thesis Aim & Hypothesis

In the definition of amulets given above, Andrews (1994: 6) highlights the *shape* of the object as an important factor in the decision to make something worthy of being an amulet. However, the majority of work done on amulets in the Ancient Near East consists for the most part of either constructed corpuses from various collections or general discussions on the connected attributes of contextual symbolism and socio-religious function. While some have taken steps toward more productive inquiries into specific aspects of Egyptian art and artefacts, such as the significance of the materials used or the number, size and colour

symbolism involved[10], what seems lacking is a noteworthy discussion on the distinct and significant influence of imagery, especially with regard to the *use* of said items. That is not to say that *nothing* has been done, rather that substantial contributions have yet to be made to this discussion (Bonfiglio 2016: 5).

A similar problem arises in works on Mesopotamian amulets where much of the focus has been placed on the stamp and cylinder seals and the reading of the cylinder images. This is hardly surprising considering the large amount of evidence in this field and the long history of these objects' use: but in this instance that is neither here nor there. This is especially since, cylinder seals, unlike stamp seals, were not always used as amulets (Collon 1987: 108). Stünkel (2019: online) writes:

> [An amulet's] magical power was often derived from a combination of several aspects, such as the amulet's *shape*, decoration, inscription, colour, material, and words spoken over the piece or acts performed with it. […] In addition, certain things found in nature, such as a claw or shell, were thought to be imbued with magical power and therefore could function as an amulet as well.

If the natural form of an object or the mere material from which it was made was enough to grant magical aid to the wearer of the item, why engrave images upon it? Why invoke the specific image of a god, a sacred animal or symbol? Even the examples mentioned briefly in the previous section of this thesis indicate that crafted images were somehow a prerequisite to the workings of many amulets.

It would then seem that the way in which imagery had been used on ancient amulets suggests that there existed a strong awareness behind the combination of imagery and purpose and that certain images may carry in themselves connotations of power that are then attached to specific magical goals. This could show conscious influence on the use of the amulet by particular images/icons. The question then becomes: to what degree? Similarly, if inscriptions were necessary for the function of the amulet, which of the two was the dominant influence?

The poor quality in workmanship and clumsily styled artistry in the production of some amulets have lead scholars to believe that there have been instances where amulets had been mass-produced. This was validated by the various sites in Egypt and Palestine where large quantities of mass-produced stamp-seals were found (Münger 2003: 70). Thus,

[10] Such as Wilkinson's (1994) "*Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art"* and Mitchell's (1986) "*Iconology; Image, Text, Ideology*" which discusses in length the concept, role, place and function of 'the image'.

first and foremost, comes to mind the question of whether such 'commercial' treatment of amulets in any way diminished the significance of amuletic imagery and inscriptions.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the influence of certain images on the use of amulets – using/referring to Egypt and Mesopotamia as case studies – by examining the level of consciousness invested in the use of specific images and their amuletic function. The intended outcome of this is to contribute at least in small part toward the larger discussion.

Throughout this thesis there will be attempted to answer the following three questions:

1. To what degree were the creators and/or carriers of amulets consciously aware of the link between the imagery and the use/ purpose of the amulets? In other words, what is the significance of the image in relation to the function of the amulets?
2. What was the purpose or added effect of the inscriptions?
3. Did the imagery of the ancient amulets influence the way in which the amulets were used? If yes, how?

As a precursor this thesis presents the following hypothesis:

> By studying the imagery in the form of or *on* amulets, one might be able to determine that there exists a definitive link between the image and the amulet which would allow *the use of specific imagery to influence the use of the amulet*.

1.1.3. Why Egypt and Mesopotamia?

This thesis acknowledges that by using two geographically and culturally distinct groups such as Egypt and Mesopotamia for this case-study, the information for the study at hand may be a bit excessive and the topic broad. This is complicated further in that this thesis will not be working with genre-based artefacts e.g. 'funerary amulets' or 'healing amulets' or 'animal shaped amulets' exclusively. The reasons for this are as follows:

1.1.3.1. Universality of amulets:

Amulets are generally considered a universal occurrence. Given that some practices – such as the use of funerary amulets and seals[11] – are also shared cross-culturally, it would be unwise to assume that there is no possibility in which the use of imagery in the way described above could not similarly transcend the parameters of any one culture. Therefore, as the focus of this thesis is not the cultures within which the phenomenon takes place but rather the presupposed probability of the phenomenon itself, it was opted to make use of two cultures instead of one so as to gain a better grasp on the proposed concept. Under no circumstances does this mean that the cultures within which this study takes place are to be ignored, instead they will be treated as relevant influences within the context of this research.

1.1.3.2. Limitations of a genre-based study:

Ideally, in a study such as this, it would be preferred that the relevant information be limited to a specific culture, time-frame, genre and corpus. Hypothetically, by restricting this study to the funerary domain, for instance, it would allow an in-depth analysis to be conducted of the various appearances, influences and implications of the phenomenon within the pre-selected cultural context. However, for such a study to be done, it first needs to be established that there is the basis of the presupposed phenomenon on which to build further inquiry. Naturally, in the example given here, all findings will be applicable only within the perspective of the considered frame of reference. Therefore, the consequences of implementing such restrictions would be that it would become indeterminable within the constraints of this thesis whether the phenomenon in question could be seen as a common occurrence in the practice of amuletic magic.

1.1.3.3. Geographical proximity:

As van Binsbergen and Wiggermann (1999: 11) have stated, the best way in which to approach a cultural-comparative analysis and gain meaningful results, is by comparing cultures that share certain commonalities[12]. Despite Egypt and Mesopotamia not sharing a geographical location in the same sense as the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians and Babylonians, Egypt and the societies of Ancient Near East (West Asia) were related "economically, diplomatically, and to a degree, culturally" (Stiebing 2009: 3). With regards to geographically proximate cultures, Syro-Palestine would have sufficed had it not been that

[11] Andrews (1994: 6, 50-59); David (2003: 163); Stünkel (2019: online) and Collon (1987: 13).
[12] Refer to 'Table 1: The Comparative and Historical Position'.

the cultural-religious influences in the area on any given ethnic group would have been too much for the context of this thesis. The geographical distance between Egypt and Mesopotamia was close enough to allow for contact through trade or during times of expansion, yet large enough so as to allow the cultures within these two regions to develop in somewhat similar but still unique ways[13].

1.1.3.4. Historical development:

By the late fourth millennium BCE, and in spite of the sustained cultural contact, the societies of southern Mesopotamia and Egypt were vastly different (Stauder 2010: 142-143). Even so, the influence of each was felt by the other, the elements of which could be seen in political activities (Stiebing 2009: 56) and in art and architectural elements (Stauder 2010: 142). The civilisations in these two regions are considered amongst the oldest in the world and their writing systems comprise two of the four 'pristine' writing systems – in other words, writing that developed *ex nihilo* "out of nothing" (Woods 2010a: 15). Furthermore, the use of amulets in both regions extends from the prehistoric era and the development of those practices with regards to stamp seals, cylinder seals and *other amulets* was much the same (Hallo 1983: 7). Though the use of cylinder seals in Mesopotamia continued for far longer than most elsewhere, Egypt sustained a strong reliance on stamp seals – especially in the funerary domain (Andrews 1994: 50-59). Both employed a variety of other amulets (e.g. written amulets and figurines/ object amulets) as well[14]. Their similarities in the use and development of amuletic magic allows for a cross cultural comparison in spite of the cultural differences.

In conclusion; in order to ascertain if the use of specific images and inscriptions have a defining influence on the use of amulets, this study needed to be conducted unbound by specific cultural and temporal frames of reference. What uniquely qualifies Egypt and the Mesopotamian cultures amongst the peoples of the ancient Near East is their related, yet still independent development not only of their histories and cultures, but of their practices with regards to magic and by extension, the use of amulets. In accounting for the *cultural differences* between them, the *similarities* in their use of amuletic magic are the possible indicators required to establish the probability of the presupposed phenomenon by way of identifiable patterns in the practice. Again, it should be noted that this thesis does in no way pretend to provide any final answers on this matter but rather hopes to form a part of a larger discussion on the subject.

[13] See Stiebing (2009: 56); Stauder (2010: 142) and Tristant & Midant-Reynes (2011: 53-54).
[14] See Müller-Winkler (1987) and van Buren (1945b).

1.2. Methodology

This section details the processes followed during the collection, exclusion, documentation and categorisation of the research materials and artefacts, as well as the selection and outlining of the combinations of theoretical approaches involved in the research undertaken within this thesis.

1.2.1. Iconography and Visual Theory: Selecting a Methodological Approach

Panofsky (1939: 3) defined iconography as "[the] branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form". He developed a model which consists of three stages that would essentially allow scholars to collect, study, interpret and eventually categorize artefacts. These stages could be summarised as follows:

Stage of Interpretation	Object of Interpretation	Aim of Interpretation	Corrective Principle of Interpretation
Pre-iconographic Description	The primary or natural subject matter (either factual or expressional) which constitutes the world of artistic motifs and is known through practical experience and familiarity with the artefacts.	Determining the nature of the artefact. I.e. What is it?	Style: Understanding the various ways in which historical (cultural and temporal) conditions influenced the expression of objects and events through forms.
Iconographic Analysis	The secondary or conventional subject matter which constitutes the world of stories, images and allegories which can be known through familiarity with literary sources, their themes and concepts.	Identify the possible meanings by using contextual/ contemporary literary sources in comparative studies. I.e. What can it mean?	Type: Understanding the various ways in which historical conditions influenced the expression of specific themes and concepts through objects and events.
Iconological Interpretation	The inherent meaning or content which constitutes the world of symbolism and symbolic values.	Finding through a combination of the previous two, the most probable meaning. I.e. What does it mean?	Meaning/ Symbols: Understanding the various ways in which historical conditions influenced the expression of cultural symbols (the inherent tendencies of the human psyche) through themes and concepts.

Table 2: Panofsky's Iconographical Method (1939: 14-15); (1955: 26-41).[15]

[15] Table modelled after van Dijk (2016: 7) and Cornelius (1988: 5).

Iconography, therefore, is concerned with the *method of evaluating* artefacts in order to *determine their message and meaning* as per the view of their creator/s and historical contexts. It advocates the 'reading' of images/ icons as one normally would a text in order to glean from them their intrinsic meaning. This position is supported by the Fribourg school and Keel (1997: 7) wrote that ancient Near Eastern art was "not intended to be viewed '*Sehbild*', but rather to be read '*Denkbild*'"[16]. The iconographic method has become a standard mode of interpretation when dealing with art, artistic artefacts and icons, regardless of the era they belong to or the discipline in question.

Conversely, critique of the iconographical method often rests on the point of argument that the manner of evaluating *images* relies too heavily on *text-based analysis* and that "the 'icon' is thoroughly absorbed by [a concern for] the 'logos'"[17]. And while "the problem with the iconographic method is not that it attempts to read images as a type of language [it is] that it assumes that the language of images operates more as an articulate notational system [rather] than as a dense one" (Bonfiglio 2016: 136). That is to say that, often, only those aspects relevant to a study are used instead of consideration being given to all elements of an artwork regardless of theoretical intentions[18].

Around the mid- to late twentieth century the focus of the questions being asked by scholars shifted from the empirical observationist approach, "towards questions about the place of images in cultural theory and the importance of visual data in historical research" (Bonfiglio 2016: 1). Regarding visual theory, Bonfiglio (2016: 9) writes:

> Beyond elucidating what images "say" (i.e., their content), scholars interested in visual theory and visual culture tend to explore what images do, how they are put to use, and why they solicit from their viewers such powerful responses of devotion and hatred, fascination and fear.

In other words, visual theory and visual culture from a historical theoretical perspective, is concerned mainly with the *negotiation of meaning and interpretation by the historical figure/ viewer* of certain events and manifestations within specific cultural and temporal contexts (Bonfiglio 2016: 17). Unlike Panofsky's 'Iconography', 'Visual Theory' shifts the focus of a study towards questions of visual signification, visual response and visual reception (Bonfiglio 2016: 124; 117-310). Yet visual theory does not aim to do away with Panofsky's model; it adapts the theoretical approach of iconography to include non-verbal aspects for

[16] Keel (1997: 7) as also quoted by van Dijk (2016: 6).
[17] Mitchell (1994: 28) as quoted by Bonfiglio (2016: 121).
[18] See Bonfiglio (2016: 128-139).

interpretation. As a form or method of visual analysis, visual theory includes in its schema a new level of examination which consists of compositional design, the rhetoric of display and modes of signification (Bonfiglio 2016: 140-170). This adaptation can be summarised as follows:

Stage of Interpretation	Object of Interpretation	Aim of Interpretation	Corrective Principle of Interpretation
Pre-iconographic Description	The primary or natural subject matter.	What is it?	Style
Iconographic Analysis	The secondary or conventional subject matter.	What can it mean?	Type
Meta-Iconographic Analysis	The non-linguistic subject matter which constitutes the world of allegorical and symbolic indication and is known through familiarity with formal art development, its themes and concepts.	Find the possible meanings by examining the compositional design, rhetoric of display and mode of signification. I.e. What does it signify?	Pictorial Signs: Understanding the various ways in which historical conditions influenced the way in which non-linguistic elements developed as cultural signifiers (dense or replete notational system) of specific themes and concepts through objects and form.
Iconological Interpretation	The inherent meaning or content.	What does it mean?	Meaning/ Symbols

Table 3: Panofsky's model summarised from the example above with Bonfiglio's (2016: 167) adaptation added in blue.

Bonfiglio provides further clarification by setting out nine principles surrounding the method and its practice (2016: 318-319):

1. Images , as an important componant of ancient symbolic systems, is an indispensible tool for studying the historical and conceptual background of the ancient world.	**2. As a widly used method of communication, images function as a type of language, the importance of which can be characterised in terms of visual literacy.**	**3. When examining the relationship between visual and verbal data, an approach should be clarified with regards to three comparative issues: image-text congruence, correlation and contiguity.**
4. The nature of visual-verbal interactions can be more accurately described if the image-text relationship is conceptualised in terms of dialectical tensions and metapictures.	**5. Images function of dense or replete notational systems and should be understood under different semiotic principles than linguistic signs.**	**6. Images should be analysed by considering how aspects of compositional design, rhetoric of display and mode of signification contribute to what an image means and how it conveys that meaning.**
7. As images are treated like living things by viewers, the nature, power and agency of ancient art objects should be noted together with the patterns and implications of the visual responses to them.	**8. Equal emphasis should be placed on the iconographic content of an image and what people do with the image during practices that employ material objects as a visual medium of belief.**	**9. Vision is informed by underlying beliefs, values and knowledge: thus it is important to account for the effects of sight on the interpretation and understanding viewers formed of visual data.**

Table 4: Summary of the Principles of Method and Application of Bonfiglio's (2016: 318-319) Visual Theoretical Approach.

In accounting for the experiences of the ancient peoples involved, their responses to images and their reception of its social implications, a visual theoretical approach broadens the spectrum of the potential lines of inquiry, allowing (possibly) for more accurate interpretation and (almost certainly) for a more intimate understanding of the psychological awareness behind the place of images in the ancient world. The application of *this* method (**see Tab. 3**) would be better suited towards the aim of this thesis – not disregarding the iconographical and iconological elements of the adapted methodological framework. However, this method will be combined with other theoretical perspectives relevant to this study; for additional information see **Chapter 2: The Image and the Mind**.

1.2.2. Research Design and Outline

The structure of this thesis consists of the following three main parts:

- **Part I: Context and Theory;** herein the general background and all the relevant contextual and theoretical information will be discussed as is needed. This section includes chapters 1 and 2.
- **Part II: Critical Analysis;** this section consists of chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 in which the available data will be analysed in order to determine if the presupposed phenomenon[19] appears within, and could be seen as an identifiable prerequisite occurrence of, the practice of amuletic magic.
- **Part III: Findings;** Chapter 7 will outline the limitations of the study as well as the recommendations for further research before discussing the conclusions drawn from this work.

The research design, therefore, comprises of the gathered examples of amulets from Egypt and Mesopotamia catalogued in the thesis corpus and the comparison and critical analysis of said examples in order to determine the function and degree of influence of images and inscriptions on the use of amulets in the practice of magic.

1.2.3. Limiting the Corpus

Considering the lack of specific temporal and cultural frames of reference to help limit the field of study, the following conditions have been set with regards to the amulets that will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

- The items in question will be divided into three categories according to the shape or appearance of the specific images that were used on the amulets. The first category is to be reserved for images that are essentially three-dimensional (in the round), such as figurines. The second category will consist of images that are two-dimensional, such as those found on amuletic plaques or on cylinder/stamp seals. The third category is for the instances where images and inscriptions are combined, such as heart amulets. The first two categories will not include any detailed discussions on amulets with inscriptions; nevertheless some amulets with inscriptions (e.g. the Nineveh dogs (**Fig. 60**)) may be used in these categories as supporting examples while only being properly discussed under the third category in Chapter 5.

[19] Refer to '1.1.2. Research Problem, Thesis Aim and Hypothesis'.

- The first category will focus specifically on the 'trans-cultural' image; in other words, images that are generally known by many cultures, including Egypt and Mesopotamia. In the context of this thesis this refers to canine and feline imagery. The second category will address cultural specific imagery; in other words, images that are a part of a specific cultural inheritance. These images may share similar themes or features, but are unique with regards to cultural design, use or symbolism. Here, the study will focus on eye symbolism, such as the Egyptian *wedjat*-eye/*Udjat*-eye and the Mesopotamian eye-idols. The third category may include images from both classifications that have been combined with inscriptions.
- For the sake of being able to do an in-depth analysis on the amulets, the amount of amulets that will be used as primary examples will be limited to single digit numbers within each culture and category. Any other artefacts will merely be discussed in order to provide support for the arguments made by the author.
- Though cylinder seals were significant within the ancient Near East (especially Mesopotamia) and functioned – to a degree – as amulets, they will not be included in the corpus of this study. There is too much that could be said to this end and it would only serve to overwhelm and confuse within the confines of this thesis. For further discussion on this point, refer to **Chapter 7.2. Recommendations for Further Studies**.
- As this thesis intends to focus on the images, and to a lesser degree, the inscriptions on amulets, written amulets and amulet capsules will also be excluded. For further discussion on this point, refer – as above – to **Chapter 7.2. Recommendations for Further Studies**.

1.2.4. Reading the Catalogue

Amulets adhering to the conditions above have been methodically and comprehensively catalogued according to the following criteria. This will allow for easier access during the analytical process. The information given within these categories will be recounted according to the available information on the various museum sites where the images were found. Any varying information or descriptions given from the perspective of this thesis will be kept within the main body of text in order to keep the official information provided by the formal institutions and the opinions of the author separate.

- **The Name/ Catalogue Number**

The Catalogue name refers to each artefact individually according to the geographical location where they were found and the category[20] that they fall into within the context of this research. M.1.1. is therefore the first amulet (overall) from Mesopotamia and falls into the first category given in this thesis. E.4.3 is the fourth Egyptian amulet (overall) which falls into the third category of the study.

- **Origin**

Refers to the location at which the object was found or was likely to have originated from. If the archaeological information regarding the exact location of origin (e.g. city name) is available in the museum records, it will be provided. However, if it is not available, there will be referred to the general region (e.g. Egypt or Mesopotamia) from which the item originates.

- **Dating**

Refers to the specific time period to which the piece has been dated. The date and time period will be provided in the catalogue and the text according to the museum entries where they are available.

- **Type**

Category indicates the specific kind of amulet that is being dealt with (e.g. figurines, sculptures, jewellery or seals).

- **Collection**

This will specify which museum is currently in possession of the artefact in question. Following the name of the museum to which the amulet belongs will be the designated museum identification number. The following abbreviations will be used to refer to the specific museums as is needed in the catalogue as well as the main body of text:

[20] Refer to '1.2.3. Limiting the Corpus'.

Museum Name	Abbreviation
British Museum	BM
Harvard Art Museum	HAM
Metropolitan Museum of Art	MMA
Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology	PMEA
Egyptian Museum in Cairo	EMC

Table 5: Abbreviations for Museums

- **Material**

This indicates the materials from which the amulets had been made, e.g. faience, gold, bronze etc.

- **Artefact Size**

The size of the amulet will be measured (in cm) according to the following criteria:

Measurements	Abbreviations
Length	l.
Width	w.
Breadth	b.
Diameter	d.

Table 6: Abbreviations for Measurements

- **Bibliography**

Lists the titles of studies that have been conducted on the amulet in question or have made mention of the amulet within their work.

- **Description**

A general description will be given of the amulet according to the information provided by the museum where the institute has made the information available. Author's description will be noted within the main body of the text. The description usually details the appearance, state of preservation, the context of the find and the function of the object.

1.2.5. Sources

The primary sources used in this study are the amulets listed within the catalogue of the thesis, limited though they may be. The images of these amulets were collected from various

museums online. Supporting examples of amulets are not included in the official corpus of the thesis, but in the illustration list and were sourced from the same museums as well as other academic publications on Egyptian and Mesopotamian amulets. The museum list includes the British Museum (*BM*) in London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art (*MMA*), New York; the Harvard Art Museum (*HAM*), Cambridge; the Egyptian Museum (EMC), Cairo; and the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology (*PMEA*), London. Some ancient texts may also be used if and when it is appropriate, e.g. the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. It is still important to note that such texts will not be a subject of this study by themselves rather; they would be used in conjunction with the artefacts discussed above as a way of gaining a greater understanding of the matter at hand.

The secondary sources that will be used consist of academic studies conducted either on the primary sources or on connected and relevant themes. A record of secondary sources began with a preliminary search of available books in the Stellenbosch University library as well as peer-reviewed articles in online databases and museum sites. This grew by searching through the bibliographies of these books and museum reference lists until adequate sources were found.

Sources were excluded when; (with regards to primary sources) the state of preservation was inadequate for the purpose of this research, the objects did not meet the necessary criteria of the divisions in the study, or if the information on a specific type of amulet was either so vague or so overwhelming that it would have far exceeded the margins of the thesis to pursue it here; (with regards to secondary sources) the information contained in the source was clearly outdated or the origin of the source was not from an acceptable academic forum.

2. The Image and the Mind

> In a sense, all ancient Near Eastern art, even when documenting real events, was symbolic.
> (van Dijk 2016: 6)

Though the introductory chapter of this thesis has touched on various theoretical perspectives and approaches related to the subject of magic, it has yet to clarify the relationship between all these connected points. Without exhausting the subject, this chapter will attempt to illustrate the convergence here.

The introduction presented a summary of the four most common theoretical approaches to magic (*Descriptive Definitional; Anthropological; Middle Eastern/ European; Comparative & Historical*) as perceived by van Binsbergen and Wiggermann (**Tab. 1**). It was

noted that the underlying principle of each approach hinged on the understanding/definition of the word 'magic'. If examined, it would seem as if the understanding of the concept 'magic' that has been provided in this thesis appeared to be an odd combination of some (if not all) of the approaches mentioned above. However, the focus of this thesis is *not just* 'magic', but *images* and their role with regards to the use of objects such as amulets.

What connection is there between the way in which the concept of magic is approached and the influence of images on the use of certain artefacts? In order to answer this question, it first needs to be understood what is meant by the notion of an 'image' and its place within the human psyche.

2.1. The Image

The 'image' is that which forms the shape of what we as human beings have come to *know* – informed, fundamentally, by the domain of experience called 'perception'. The sheer volume of phenomena perceived and categorised, somewhat instinctively, as 'images' seem to indicate that "any systematic, unified understanding" of the term is theoretically "impossible" (Mitchell 1986: 9). Yet in spite of the plethora of pictures, films, optic illusions, metaphors and similes, stories, projections, poems, patterns, memories and even *ideas*, that are heaped beneath the same banner (that of the 'image') (Mitchell 1986: 9), the practical experience that informed the development of the concept – and its place in the human psyche – allowed for *shared* and "automatic attribution of meaning" (Peterson 1999: 2). In other words, due to the development of the role of images in the human mind, not only can various images convey specific meaning to people of diverse backgrounds, but the very notion of what constitutes an 'image' can be shared trans-culturally and temporally, despite subjective influences:

> Everyone understands the child who says, […] "I saw a scary man"; the child's description is immediate and concrete, even though he or she has attributed to the object of perception a quality that is in fact context-dependant and subjective. […] The automatic attribution of meaning to things […] is a characteristic of narrative, of myth, not of scientific thought. Narrative captures the nature of raw experience.
>
> Peterson (1999: 2)

It is also important to understand that there are different *types* of 'images' and that each of these are integral to the discourses of intellectual disciplines (Mitchell 1986: 10). These are not the metaphors, optical illusions and ideas mentioned above, but rather the classifications

according to which these 'images' are categorised. Mitchell (1986: 10) describes these as a 'family of images' which can be best illustrated as follows:

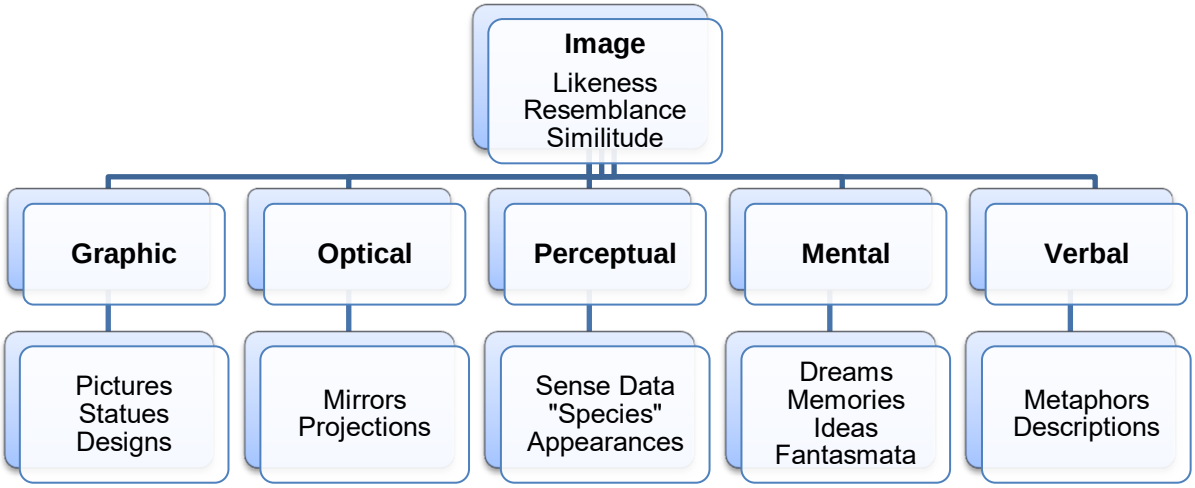

Figure 11: The Family Tree of Images, Adapted from Mitchell (1986: 10).

Graphic imagery is studied by art historians; optical imagery by physicists; mental imagery by psychologists and epistemologists; verbal imagery by literary critics (Mitchell 1986: 10). Perceptual imagery, that which informs the other types, occupies "a kind of border region where physiologists, neurologists, psychologists, art historians, and students of optics find themselves collaborating with philosophers and literary critics" (Mitchell 1986: 10). Each of these influences the other while retaining a dependence on perception-experience so that the relationship between them appears somewhat like this:

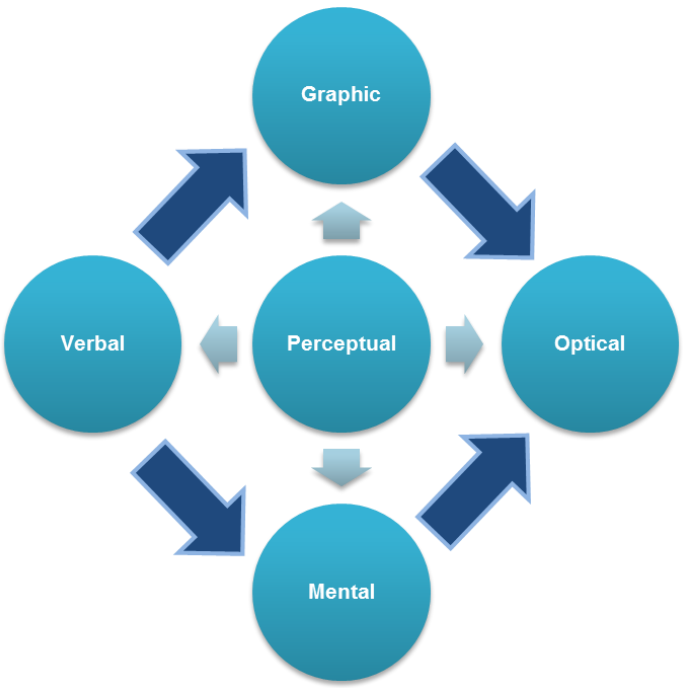

Figure 12: Image Type Relationships by Author.

The perceptual realm of images forms the border between the physical and the psychological, reality and illusion (Mitchell 1986: 10). Not only does *what* and *how* people *perceive* influence their thoughts and actions, thereby generating their "Maps of Experience" (Peterson 1999: 1-18), but *vision* and by extension then *perception* "is deeply informed by underlying beliefs, values and knowledge" (Bonfiglio 2016: 319).

> […] viewers play an active role in the meaning making process and are capable of accepting, opposing or reimagining predominant interpretations of an image based on the unique set of epistemological lenses or "covenants" that *condition* their gaze.
>
> Bonfiglio (2016: 290).

2.2. The Mind

The human brain, through the strain of constantly and instinctively needing to survive a world beyond human control (Breniquet 2002: 145), has adapted over the course of millennia to be able to navigate the two main domains of experience that govern the human environment: the "domain of the known" and the "domain of the unknown" (**Fig. 13**) (Peterson 1999: 19-20). The 'known' is the explored, familiar territory – the 'safe'; the 'unknown' is the unexplored, unfamiliar territory – the primordial chaos that embodies potential threat (Peterson 1999: 20, 141). It is only through the potentially detrimental, creative exploration of the 'unknown' that new knowledge can be generated – that those things which exist in the 'known' can be classified as positive or negative according to its impact on the human environment and goals (Peterson 1999: 20-32). Thus these domains govern the *meaning* attributed to objects and their implication for behaviour (Peterson 1999: 2).

> Everything *is* something, and *means* something […] For people operating naturally, like [a] child, what something signifies is more or less inextricably *part* of the thing, part of its magic. The magic is of course due to apprehension of the specific cultural and intrapsychic significance of the thing, and not to its objectively determinable sensory qualities. […] It is difficult, after all, to realise the subjective nature of fear, and not feel threat as part of the "real" world.
>
> Peterson (1999: 2)

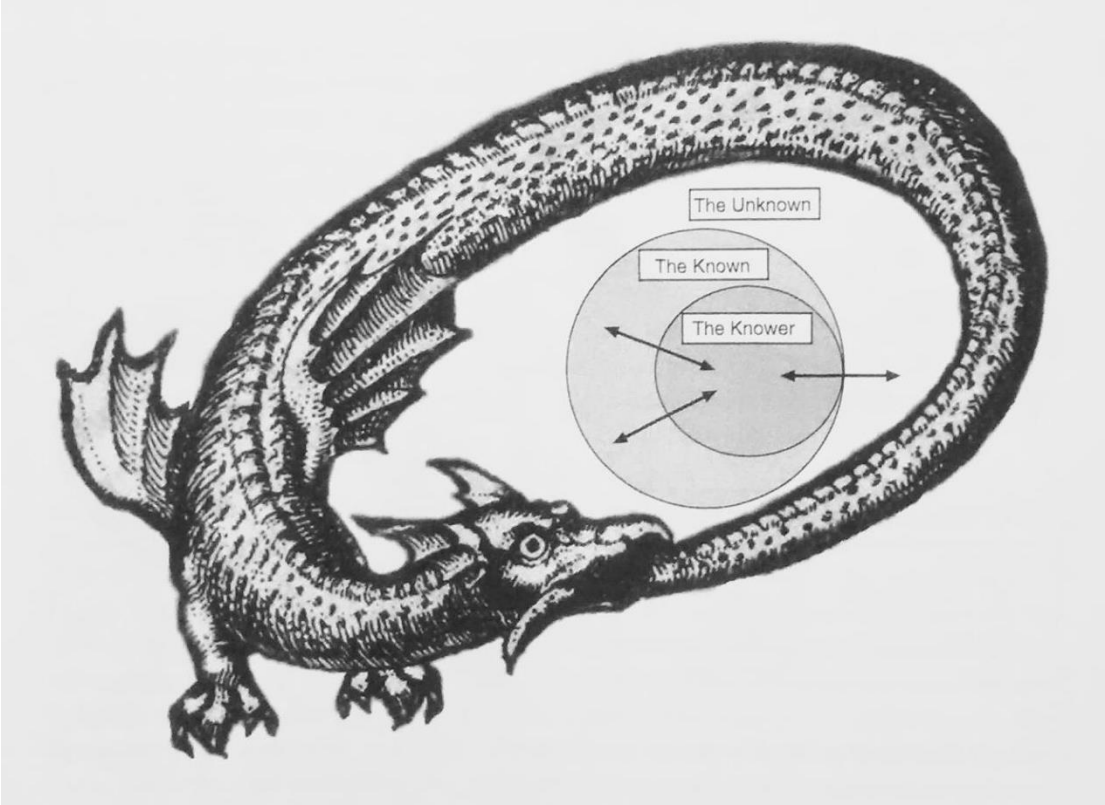

Figure 13: The Uroboros (Precosmogonic Dragon of Chaos) and the Constituent Elements of the World, in Dynamic Relationship (Peterson 1999: 146, 141-148).

Images, therefore, constitute the realm of the 'known' in *shape* or *form* and the *meaning* of images extend beyond the mere distinction between representation and the realm of the 'real' (Bonfiglio 2016: 195). As a result "viewers [of images] have tended to talk about and treat visual representation in ways that suggest that images are thought to be more like living beings than immediate works of art" (Bonfiglio 2016: 195). Images are essentially granted "the function of social agents" (Bonfiglio 2016: 195). Peterson (1999: 3) wrote:

> We become impressed or terrified, despite ourselves, in the presence of a sufficiently powerful cultural figurehead […] who [ ] embodies the oft-implicit values and ideals that protect us from disorder and lead us on. […] we do not even need the person to generate such affect. The *icon* will suffice.

Within the religious mind set, the world is made up of those things or beings that are beyond human comprehension or control (embodiments of the 'unknown'), whose power over the immediate domains of experience of people cannot be overcome by human means alone, or

at all (nature, disaster, disease, death) (van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 1999: 11). It is therefore the natural reaction of the mind to attempt to conceive of ways in which these powers – whether by contract or gift (or any means necessary) – could be harnessed by humans for survival purposes; hence, the birth of magic. After all, people's "affective, cognitive and behavioural responses to the unknown or [the] unpredictable are 'hard-wired' […] [and] constitute inborn structural elements of the process of consciousness itself" (Peterson 1999: 21).

2.3. The Theory

The majority of the human condition is therefore determined by various 'domains of experience'. Images, their form and their function, are determined by the 'domain of perception'. The value of objects/ phenomena in the human psyche and their implications for action are determined by their place within and in relation to the domains of the 'known' and 'unknown'. According to van Binsbergen and Wiggermann (1999: 11-15)[21], the concept of magic and its place in the human life and society, is determined by the 'domain of experiencing (or conceptualising) and effecting *control*'. This domain can be divided into four types/ contexts:

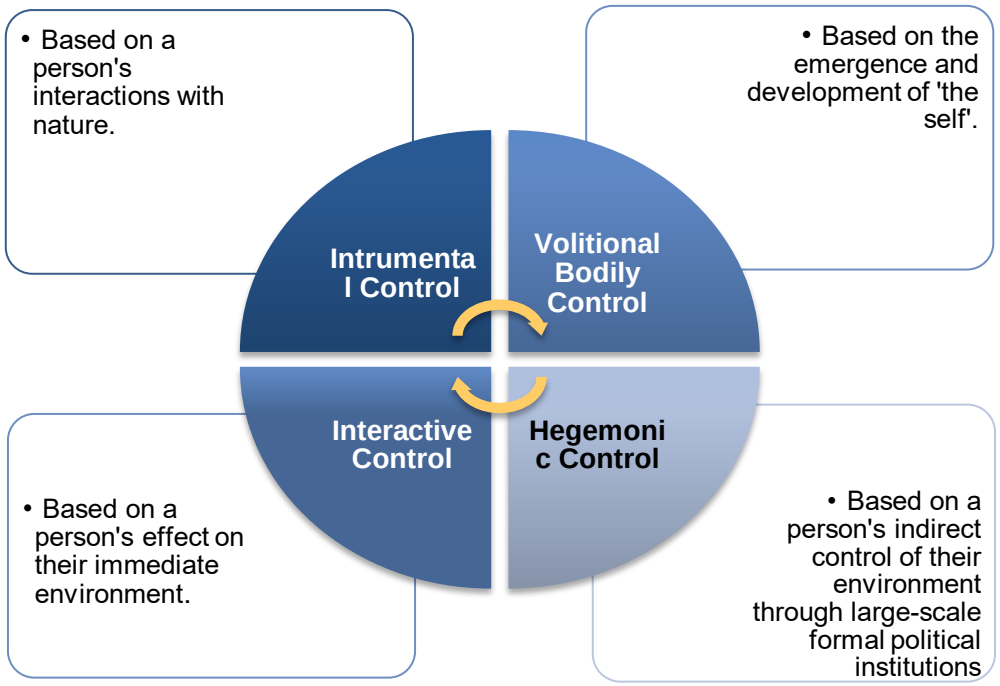

Figure 14: The Four Contexts of the Domain of Control, by Author, Adapted from van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999: 11-15).

[21] This view is taken after the students of magic who follow the teachings of Frazer and his interpretation of the appearance of magic in the ancient world.

Theoretically, this approach to magic could be seen to rest on the understanding of the phenomenon of magic as a tool or device for control. The practice of magic, then, as a device for control, is necessary for the maintenance of the order of the 'known' which in turn protects people from the dangers of the 'unknown' and "provides [their] experience with determinate and predictable structure" (Peterson 1999: 18). Van Binsbergen and Wiggermann stated that "for an appreciation of the emergence of magic from the interplay of these domains [(**Fig. 14**)], it is relevant to look not only at experiences of control, but also at their counterparts; experiences of failure of control, and of the anxiety this creates" (1999: 15). In other words, magic appeared within the experiential realm of people's lives, as a *direct result of the dire consequences of failing to control* aspects of their lives in the contexts within which they *could* exert control over their environment; in order to act as a device of control in those areas where previous *human* endeavours had failed them.

> […] instinctive response drives learning – particularly, but not exclusively, the learning of appropriate behaviour. All such learning takes place – or took place originally – as a consequence of contact with novelty, or anomaly.
>
> Peterson (1999: 19)

The experience gained from contact with the 'known' and 'unknown' domains of existence, and the perception of what is encountered there, not only informs the 'image', but the 'image' is endowed with the qualities of that which it represents (Bonfiglio 2016: 177); thus, "our responses to images may be of the same order as our response to reality" (Freedberg 1989: 284). It is why the "icon will suffice", why the subjective nature of fear cannot be realised without feeling the threat in the 'real' world, why *how* people perceive is influenced fundamentally by *what* they believe, influenced in turn by what they *perceive*, and why narrative, the verbal 'image', can capture raw experience[22]. Whether consciously or not, the human psyche attaches *meaning* to the 'images' it encounters and that meaning governs the *implication for action* imbedded in the images and implements that which is necessary for survival through the exertion of *control*.

2.4. The Connection

What does the approach to magic have to do with the influence of images on the use of artefacts such as amulets? While some elements of the interpretations of the previously

[22] Peterson (1999: 2-3) and Bonfiglio (2016: 290): as quoted above.

mentioned approaches to magic may have filtered into the definition provided by this thesis, the main view with which this study intends to approach the concept is that of magic existing as a device to be used to exert control over an uncontrollable environment. In this context then, the approach to magic essentially becomes the approach to images. One cannot examine the way in which magic is implemented to exert control over something, if one does not understand the way in which *the image* and images involved, influence the situational implication for action through attributed *meaning*, or the endowed qualities and social function they embody. By extension, it would be indeterminable how images influence the use of objects too.

If, as Graf (2002: 94) wrote, "[the] basis of magic is the [communication] between human and superhuman beings" – and amulets (objects whose function is primarily *to protect*) combine images (conveyers of *meaning*) with magic (as a mode of *extra-human communication*) with the intent of *implementing* a form of *control* – then amulets are essentially tools that employ visual communication with the supernatural to act as the 'sword and shield' of ancient people against the consequences of interaction with the threat of the uncontrollable 'unknown'.

It is as yet unclear if this intricate connection is the result of a subconscious reaction to situational pressure or simply a conscious endeavour to avert negative outcomes, or even, if ancient people were visually literate enough to understand the communicative function of images in such contexts. Bonfiglio (2016: 43) writes:

> Images would have functioned as 'mass media' of the ancient world only to the extent that a vast number of people from diverse segments of [ ] society would have possessed the skills needed to read and understand minor art as a language of communication […] it is not possible to quantitatively calculate visual literacy rates in the ancient world […]

However, it has been suggested that "in the context of largely illiterate societies, minor arts had a much greater impact and larger diffusion than texts could ever achieve" (Uehlinger 2000: xxv). This thesis proposes that a way in which this phenomenon could be understood is by grasping the connection between the role of images and the function of objects.

Therefore, in the following chapters this thesis intends to examine the way in which images influenced the use of amulets in Egypt and Mesopotamia by making use of the Iconographical method as adapted by Bonfiglio[23], whilst applying the theoretical perspectives described above.

[23] Refer to '1.2.1. Iconography and Visual Theory: Selecting a Methodological Approach', (**Tab. 3**).

PART II: Case Studies

3. Invoking Spirits

Millennia before the dawn of the historic era, animals played an integral part of human development (Mason 2007: 18). Throughout the human evolution, these "others" have fascinated people, moving people's minds even as they were evolving (Mason 2007: 18) and evidence of socio-religious connections stretch back as far as 125,000 BCE (Kalof 2007: 1). By the end of the second millennium BCE, not only had domestication of animals long been achieved, but selective breeding of animals had also been established in both Egypt and Mesopotamia (Babylonia) of – among others – dogs (Kalof 2007: 5). That animals were revered as sacred in the ancient world is under no doubt (Ikram 2005a: 1). In Egypt, some animals were worshipped during their lives and buried with great ceremony after their death (Ikram 2005a: 1). Others, who were mummified, could be used as votive offerings to those deities to whom they were sacred (Ikram 2005a: 1). Shepard (1978: 2)[24] wrote:

> There is a profound, inescapable need for animals that is in people everywhere; […] [that] is no vague, romantic, or intangible yearning, no simple sop to our loneliness or nostalgia for Paradise. It is as hard and unavoidable as the compounds of our inner chemistry. It is universal but poorly recognised. It is the peculiar way that animals are used in the growth and development of the human person, in those most priceless qualities, which we lump together as "mind". It is the role of animal images and form in the shaping of personality, identity, and social consciousness. Animals are amongst the first inhabitants of the mind's eye.

Figure 15: Panel with Striding Lion, ca. 604-562 BCE, Neo-Babylonian period (MMA: 31.13.2).

[24] As quoted by Mason (2007: 18).

The '*image'* of the animal is branded into the consciousness of the human mind. Due to this deep connection, this chapter will focus on amulets that contain animal imagery: specifically canine and feline imagery from both Egypt and Mesopotamia.

3.1. Egyptian Felines

3.1.1. Amulet Description:

Figure 16: E.1.1. ca. 664-30 BCE, Egyptian cat in the round.

Made out of copper, this Egyptian cat sits at attention; its ears and face turned forward with wide open eyes. The sculpture has been made in the round and much consideration has been given to detail. The cat's front paws and legs, haunches and tail, shoulders, body-shape and facial features are all clearly visible. The sculpture as a whole is brown in colour, with some areas lighter and others darker. Discolouration can be found on the lower stomach area of the cat's body, yet whether this is due to a change in the composition of the metal or the presence of a foreign substance on the sculpture is unknown. Holes have been made in the ears of the cat with clear indentations where adornments were likely placed. A scarab has been incised on the cat's head, along with a *wedjat eye* pendant, which gives the appearance of an amulet hanging around this feline's neck.

3.1.2. Cultural Significance:

There is often the misguided belief that the ancient Egyptian people held cats in esteem above all other animals and that all cats were worshipped, mummified and entombed because they were sacred or even *divine* creatures in their own right (Zivie & Lichtenberg 2005: 106). However, like all animals the Egyptians held in special regard, before all else it was the deity to whom the animal was considered special that was the focus of the devotion; cats were no exception (Teeter 2002b: 335). "The animal is sacred through delegation and association rather than on any other merits" (Zivie & Lichtenberg 2005: 106). This did not mean that the domestic cat did not hold a special place in the life of Egyptians as a pet; in truth, the cat and the dog both, were very much the cherished companions they are today (Morris 2007: 183).

The Egyptian's love for their pets did not end with life and various attempts were made to ascertain the ability for a continued existence together in the Afterlife (Ikram 2005a: 1-2). Such attempts naturally included the mummification of pets (Ikram 2005a: 1-4). Furthermore, Egyptians sometimes painted images of their pets on the wall of their tombs in order to ensure the animal's presence in the next life (Ikram 2005a: 1). The magic and religious power contained in these images, it was believed, would allow these pets to re-join their masters (Ikram 2005a: 1). Finally, on rarer occasion, an animal's name would be added to its image in the tomb, "providing further insurance for an eternal life" (Ikram 2005a: 2). The Egyptians did not discriminate and mummies of various exotic pets such as lions could be found in royal tombs (Ikram 2005a: 2).

Figure 17: Votive Cat Statues made of Bronze (Ikram 2005a: 11).

However, that the mummies of cats (and other animals) were used as votive offerings to their corresponding deities in order to ensure continued favour of the deity is unmistakeable (Ikram 2005a: 9). Cats were often used as offerings to Bastet and figurine-amulets such as the one above could also be used as votive offerings alongside such mummies (Ikram 2005a: 9, 11).

Even though Bastet was not the only deity to be associated with the domestic feline (Teeter 2002b: 337), she is better known for the connection (De Jong 2001: 512). Bastet cults and cults for the lioness divinities frequently went hand in hand (Zivie & Lichtenberg 2005: 106-107) which is likely due to the fact that Bastet had initially (and even through the Late Period) been depicted as a lioness-headed deity (2005: 110). During the Middle Kingdom, Bastet, and the lioness deity Sekhmet, essentially became two sides of the same coin; the latter – wild and ferocious – being viewed as the "scorching" eye of Re, while the former was seen more as the appeasing aspect and therefore the "mild eye" (De Jong 2001: 512). Bastet was seen as an embodiment of feminine sexuality and fertility and associated strongly with the protection of pregnant women and infants (De Jong 2001: 512). On the other hand, Sekhmet was associated with war, pestilence and illness (De Jong 2001: 512). However, doctors who were of the highest order were priests of Sekhmet who were called *wabau* – and she was therefore connected to the healing arts as well (David 2003: 375, 376).

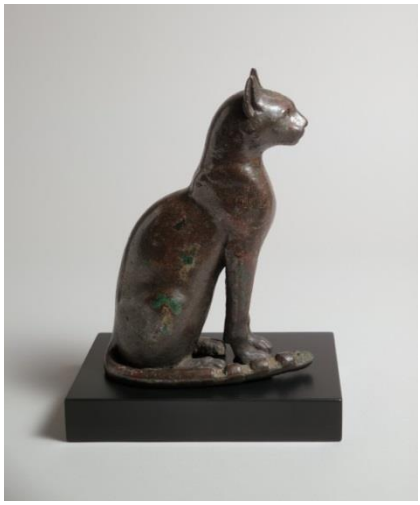

Figure 18: Votive Cat Statue made of Bronze, Ptolemaic period (HAM: 1962.69).

Both natural lions and domestic cats featured prominently in Egyptian art (Houlihan 2002: 99-100, 104) and literature (Teeter 2002a: 256, 258) amongst various other feline species that the ancient Egyptians would have encountered throughout their lives (Houlihan 2001c: 513). These included:

> […] **lions** (*Panthera leo*) *rw*, *mꜣi* and *mꜣi ḥzꜣ*; **leopards** (*Panthera pardus*) *ꜣbi*, *ꜣbi šm‘*, *bꜣ*, *bꜣ šm‘*, and *knmwt*; **cheetahs** (*Acinonyx jubatus*) *nṯr(i)t*, *ꜣbi*, *ꜣbi mḥ*, *bꜣ mḥ*, and *mꜣfdt* (?); **servals** (*Felis serval*); **caracals** (*Caracal caracal*) *inb*; **wild cats** or **jungle cats** (*Felis sylvestris, Felis chaus*); and the **domestic cat** (*Felis catus*) *miw* […] and feminine *miit*.[25]

This is likely due to the view the Egyptians are believed to have held with regards to the ‘purity’ of animals through their connection to certain deities. Teeter (2002a: 252) writes:

> The awareness that gods were ever-present and that they were incarnate in animal forms, joined with the factor that the boundary between the religious texts and literary texts was always flexible[26]. […] This association of animals with gods, and the perceived purity of the natural state of animals added to their role in moralistic tales.

Egyptian fables of animals echo important life lessons, often inspired by the characteristics of the animals they represent. In *Mythus*, a story from the Late Period, a mouse saves a lion by freeing him from his restraints (Lichtheim 1980: 159). By the end of the story, the little mouse rides off into the mountains on the back of the great lion, sitting safely in the larger animal’s mane (Lichtheim 1980: 159). Not only does this story take the view that the weak could have the power to save the strong, but it indicates the “perfect […] symbiotic existence of the weak and the powerful” and how good stems from good (Teeter 2002a: 257-258). In these forms, animals functioned not only as the embodiment of morality, but as teachers to peoples’ sense of it as well as the mysteries of the natural world around them (Mason 2007: 28).

3.1.3. Material Symbolism:

Consider first the amulet’s form. The basic shape of the amulet is clearly that of a feline, very likely a domestic cat. As such, it is possible that the amulet is in some way connected to the

[25] See Houlihan (2001c: 513) and Osborn & Osbornová (1998: 106-123).
[26] Loprieno (1996: 216-17) as quoted by Teeter (2001a: 252).

deity Bastet, who – as indicated above – was predominantly, though not exclusively, associated with this particular feline (De Jong 2001: 512). Thus the "primary" association (Wilkinson 1994: 16) of this amulet's *form* is its likely connection with Bastet. This connection is supported by the other offerings of its kind that were dedicated to the feline divinity (**see Fig. 17 & 18**) and that figures representing Bastet often had added adornments such as jewellery. Additionally, Ikram (2005a: 11) points out that, votive figures such as this, were often direct representatives of divinities in animal form, rather than mere associated companions of the divine. It would therefore be reasonable to conclude that the feline's *magical purpose* was likely associated with either feminine sexuality and fertility, protection of an infant and/ or pregnant woman or all of the above (De Jong 2001: 512).

Figure 19: Feline ring amulet, ca. 1295-664 BCE, Ramesside/Third Intermediate period (MMA: 2017.34).

The posture of the cat is interesting as well. It is seated, yet its body appears coiled and ready for action; its stance gives the impression of leaning forward and having a raised chin both by a mere fraction. This attentive pose can be observed in other feline amulets as well (**see fig. 19 & 20**). The cats in these amulets are surrounded by smaller feline figures, possibly kittens. Here, this intent posture could be read as an indication of protectiveness. This is supported somewhat in the way the larger cat seems to loom over the smaller figures – as if to assert a sense of authority. Hypothetically: if one was to accept the hypothesis of a mother cat protecting her young, then her posture and position at the back with all the kittens in front of her, would likely allow her to shield them from dangers from behind, while still being able to move swiftly forward as is needed to protect them. It is possible that the posture of the copper feline has a similar intent behind it.

Figure 20: Feline amulet made of faience, 1070-664 BCE, Dynasty 21-25 (MMA: 15.43.23).

Bronze was, at times, used to substitute for gold however, the metal does not appear to have had any specific symbolic significance (Wilkinson 1994: 83).It was sturdy but malleable and only required hammering to bend it to shape (Lacovara 2001: 295). It was also the preferred metal for currency for a long period of time, indicating its economic value (Lacovara 2001: 295). Similarly, the small size of the amulet may have deeper meaning, yet it is equally possible that its size "may be purely a matter of artistic

experimentation or a display of skill" (Wilkinson 1994: 42). Given that the larger figures of the same copper figurine were used to house the mummies of cats (Houlihan 2001c: 515), it is possible that the size of ***E.1.1.*** had more to do with its amuletic/votive purpose than simple artistic styling.

The final forms of material signification that can be found on the amulet are the incised magical symbols. The scarab beetle on the feline's head was a potent symbol of the eternal renewal of life (David 2003: 163). Furthermore the incised eye of Horus, or *wedjat* amulet, was an equally powerful symbol of "completeness or wholeness", of regeneration (David 2003: 163). It is possible that both these symbols, combined with the associated attributes of the divinity Bastet, had a significant influence on the eventual use of the amulet.

3.1.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

Considering the elements above, and the idea that this amulet may have been used as an offering in a temple, this thesis would propose the following interpretation of the symbolism of the amulet, the purpose of the feline image and the amulet's final function:

The basic principle behind the use of this feline amulet is as an appeasement offering to the deity Bastet (Ikram 2005a: 9, 11). However, the symbolism attached to the amulet indicates that a deeper meaning may be imbedded in the use of the amulet. This thesis proposes that it may be possible to read the material symbolism of the amulet as an invocation for the deity's aid with fertility and protection. This is a very literal understanding of the symbolism involved and other interpretations are certainly possible. This interpretation, however, stems from reading the symbolic meaning of the amulet as follows:

The three dimensional shape of the feline was likely intended to provide, through magic, a 'living' body for Bastet to manifest in. This could possibly be achieved through the use of the magic inherent in the image of the cat in much the same way as the images of pets in tombs would allow them to live on with their masters in the Afterlife (Ikram 2005a: 1-2). The posture of the cat is poised for action, coiled and attentive, possibly indicating that the cat (or by extension then, the deity Bastet) should be ready to act to protect at any moment; but against what?

The symbols incised on the cat's body, could be read as an appeal for aid with fertility. As Bastet was associated with feminine sexuality and fertility and the protection of pregnant women and infants (De Jong 2001: 512), it is probably more likely that (though not an absolute in any way) this amulet was used or dedicated by a woman. The incised scarab beetle on the head of the cat symbolising the eternal renewal of life, and the eye of Horus amulet incised around its neck symbolising regeneration and "wholeness" (David 2003: 163)

– when combined with these associated attributes of Bastet – seem to indicate that the appeal in this offering was aimed at reproduction and childbearing. The protection that was needed then, in this context, has likely to do with protecting someone from those forces that would hinder, disrupt or prevent conception and healthy childbirth. This theory is supported in that there were many dangers involved in pregnancy and childbirth in ancient Egypt, and many mothers and infants did not survive even after the birthing process was over (David 2003: 360).

This thesis would therefore conclude that the function of this amulet was three-tiered: an offering meant to earn the good graces of the feline divinity Bastet, an appeal for aid with fertility and conception and a request for protection from those forces, mundane and supernatural, that could threaten conception as well as the life of the pregnant mother and her infant.

3.2. Egyptian Canines

3.2.1. Amulet Description:

Figure 21: E.2.1. ca. late 1st century BCE, Egyptian canine in the round.

The general characteristics of the animal in this amulet are far more simplistic than those of the feline above. While one can clearly make out the shape of the head, ears and neck, the body, legs, hind quarters and tail, there appears to be no large amount of time spent on intricate detail. The entire artefact consists of gold and is in the round. The animal, which has been identified as belonging to the canine family, stands – seemingly at attention – on a golden base. Suspension loops are attached to the left side of the base and two more on the left of the body. Some indentations have been made to indicate what appear to be the eyes, while the canine's paws had been replaced with hooves. Though most of the canine's features appear to be somewhat exaggerated such as the elongated ears and neck, there does appear to have been some effort made towards an indication of emotion, possibly aggression, through the raised lips and bared teeth of the animal.

3.2.2. Cultural Significance:

Much like the country's felines, Egypt's canines were revered for their connection to certain deities and like cats they were afforded the respect of a 'proper' burial through mummification (David 2003: 46). As pets, dogs were just as precious to their owners as cats. One man named Hapymin even went so far as to bury his dog with him in his coffin, curled up at his feet (Ikram 2005a: 4). Furthermore, canines – like felines – could also be used as votive offerings to certain deities (Ikram 2005b: 223).

Some of the most prominent animal catacombs were found at Saqqara (David 2003: 46). Here dogs and cats each had their own sacred necropolises where they were buried (Nicholson 2005: 56). A votive mummy from the Ptolemaic Period dedicated to the deity Anubis was found inside a plastered and painted form of the divinity; though it was unclear whether the animal inside was a dog or a jackal, it was presumed more likely to be a dog (Ikram 2005b: 223). The earliest indication of the presence of the domestic canine in Egypt goes hand in hand with the herding of domestic ungulates during the late pre-historic period (ca. 4800 BCE) and the selective breeding of this species was very likely inspired by the need for the performance of different tasks by the dawn of the Dynastic Periods (Brewer 2002: 449-450). Although the bond between the domestic canine and humans had by then already been firmly established (Rice 2006: 8), the presence of these domestic companions in the lives of the Egyptians, appear to have been no more influential than those of their wild cousins.

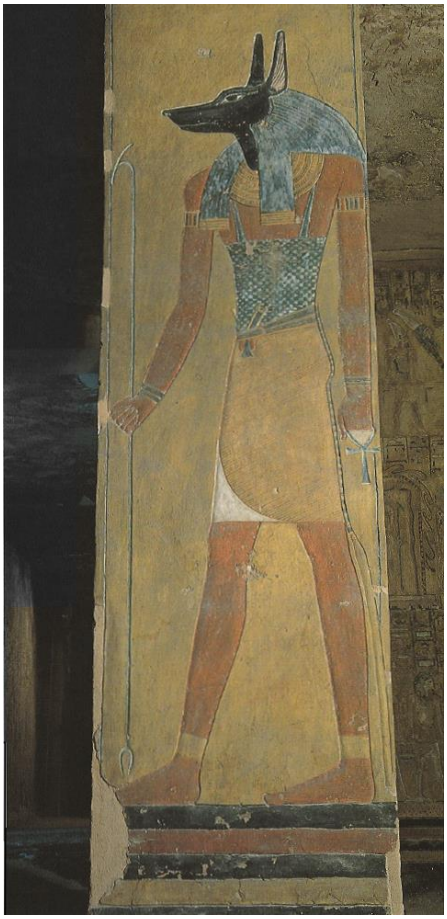

Figure 22: Depiction of the black jackal-headed Anubis from the 19th Dynasty, Tomb of Tawosret, Valley of the Kings, Western Thebes (Wilkinson 2003: 189).

The variety of canine species that occupied this geographical region included:

> […] the **Cape hunting dog** (*Lycaon pictus*); the **domestic dog** (*Canis familiaris*), called *ṯsm* and *iwiw* or *iw* […]; the **common** or **golden jackal** (*Canis aureus* subsp. *lupaster*), *wnš* and *sꜣb*; the **striped hyena** (*Hyaena hyaena*), *ḥṯt*; and the **red fox** (*Vulpes vulpes* subsp. *aegyptiaca*), *wꜣs* and *wsr*.
>
> (Houlihan 2001b: 229)

The Egyptian canine deities played an equally significant role to those of the feline divinities, and those who could be recognised from very early stages of Egyptian religion include Khenty-Imentiu (Khenti-Amentiu), Duamutef (Tuamutef), Wepwawet (Upuaut), and Anubis (Anpu, Inpu) (Osborn & Osbornová 1998: 75). Of these, perhaps the most well-known are Anubis and Wepwawet, both of who were frequently associated (though not exclusively) with the golden jackal as deities of the dead (David 2003: 205). The likely reason for he jackal's link to the dead could be found in the animal's habit of frequenting and scavenging around cemeteries at night (David 2003: 205).

Figure 23: Wepwawet on his standard, bronze amulet, 664-30 BCE, Late period-Ptolemaic period (MMA: 23.6.6).

Anubis and Wepwawet were often confused with one another, even in the texts written by the ancient Egyptians themselves (Wilkinson 2003: 191). One way in which the two can be differentiated from one another is through colour: Anubis was depicted in black (**Fig. 22**) – the colour associated with the corpses of the dead and the rich fertile earth as a symbol of regeneration – and Wepwawet in grey (Wilkinson 2003: 189-191). Furthermore, when in zoomorphic form, the jackal representing Wepwawet was often depicted standing (many times on a standard) with his back legs together (**see Fig. 23 & 24**) (Wilkinson 2003: 191) much like the amulet above.

Wepwawet was the local deity of the thirteenth Nome of Upper Egypt (modern Asyut) which was named Lycopolis ("Town of the Wolf") by the Greeks, possibly because the deity was misidentified as a wolf on multiple occasions (Houser-Wegner 2001: 497). The name Wepwawet (*Wp-wȝ.wt*) means "opener of the ways" (Houser-Wegner 2001: 497). Due to the deity's warlike nature some scholars have interpreted the meaning of Wepwawet's name to "refer to the opening of ways before the king in terms of military conquest" (Wilkinson 2003: 191). Yet Houser-Wegner (2001: 497) writes:

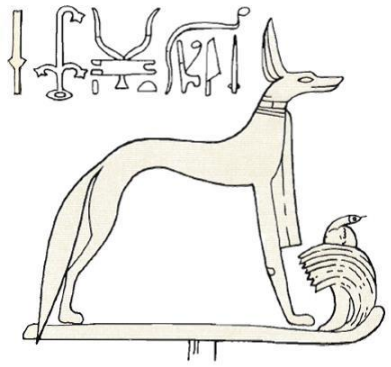

Figure 24: Wepwawet on his characteristic standard, relief of Ramses III (Wilkinson 2003: 191).

> In the funerary texts of the New Kingdom, such as the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (*Book of the Dead*) and the *Book of That Which Is in the Underworld* (*Amduat*), Wepwawet's role is that of a protective deity. In royal mythology, the king was accompanied by a fast, doglike creature while hunting, and the animal was referred to as "the one with the sharp arrow who is more

> powerful than the gods". These arrows also "opened the way", and may be connected to the name of this deity.

In light of such descriptions, it seems logical to conclude that the Egyptians viewed canines – both wild and domestic – as powerful creatures, fierce and beloved companions (Rice 2006: 43-77). The importance of the bond between canines and humans is best illustrated in *The Tale of the Doomed Prince*, where, in spite of a prophecy that the prince would die by a dog, it was said: "bring him a puppy [so that] his heart [will not] grieve" (Lichtheim 1976: 200)[27]. Instances such as this highlight the level of trust that the Egyptians invested in their canine companions and the importance of the role they played in the day-to-day lives of the Egyptian people.

3.2.3. Material Symbolism:

Andrews (1994: 41) identified this amulet as a likely representation of the deity Wepwawet. Based on the shape of the amulet, which is predominantly canine and appears more jackal than dog, it seems to be a valid deduction. However, based on this alone, the possibility also exists that this canine could be a representation of Anubis. What further supports Andrew's claim is that the animal appears to be standing on a platform of sorts, possibly the standard that is typically linked with Wepwawet (**Fig. 23 & 24**) (Wilkinson 2003: 191). The canine in the amulet bears the same upright and alert posture as other depictions of the deity and the bared teeth, as a possible show of aggression, could be an indication of the deity's associated warlike nature (Wilkinson 2003: 191). This thesis is therefore inclined to support the view that the primary association of the amulet's form (Wilkinson 1994: 17) is with the deity Wepwawet.

That the entire amulet is made of gold is significant. As a malleable metal, gold was associated with the sun and "had profound implications for the Afterlife" (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 34). It was considered to be the "flesh of the gods" and was used as a means of attaining immortality (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 34). Wilkinson (1994: 83-84) writes:

> […] this metal was regarded as a divine and imperishable substance, its untarnished nature providing a metaphor of eternal life and its brightness an image of the brilliance of the sun. […] Because the flesh of all the gods descended from Re was also said to be of gold, the use of this metal for statues and other representations of deities was certainly

[27] As quoted by Teeter (2002a: 255).

> symbolic. […] The gold of these objects may have been seen as not only symbolising the golden bodies of the gods but perhaps also as magically conferring eternal survival through its imperishable nature.

The symbolic value of the gold may account for the size of the artefact, as it may have been believed that the power inherent in the metal would be great enough to render a larger size unnecessary to the purpose of the amulet. However, the suspension loops on the left side of the amulet clearly indicate that the artefact was meant to be threaded and worn, thus also allowing for more practical reasons for the object's size.

What is most noteworthy of the material signification of the amulet is that the jackal's paws had been replaced with hooves. In both **Fig. 23** and **Fig. 24**, the canines' paws are as they should be. A possible interpretation of this singularity may be that this amuletic canine was meant to be linked symbolically with "beasts of burden", such as donkeys or horses, both of which were known to Egypt in antiquity (Brewer 2002: 446-448). If this theory is accepted, the symbolic link may be viewed to be aimed at horses rather than donkeys, and the speed with which these animals could move; especially in the contexts of war and hunting as described in the previous chapter[28].

Figure 25: Reclining dog amulet, 664-30 BCE, Ptolemaic period (MMA: 26.7.882).

3.2.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

Taking into account the information that has been presented above, this thesis would propose the following interpretation of the canine amulet ***E.1.2.***, its function and symbolism:

The basic use of this amulet appears to be as a means to invoke the protection of the deity Wepwawet. The three dimensional shape of this canine amulet and the associated symbolic divine essence of the material from which the object was made (Wilkinson 1994: 83-84), suggests that in *form* this amulet had the same function as the feline amulet above; to present a 'body' within which the intended deity could physically manifest in the 'real' world. This thesis proposes that the following interpretation of this amulet may be possible by reading the material symbolism within the context of the cultural significance and historical time-frame of the amulet's production.

The posture of the canine appears threatening, to a degree. This is due to its raised lips and bared teeth as well as the very watchful posture of the animal; its ears up and alert,

[28] Wilkinson (2003: 191) and Houser-Wegner (2001: 497).

its body in a standing position, from which the jackal could immediately move into action, rather than a sitting or reclining position as in **Fig. 25**, which would instantly provoke a sense of relaxation or calm. This show of aggression – though possibly simply a trait associated with the jackal – suits the noted warlike nature of Wepwawet (Wilkinson 2003: 191). It also speaks to the historical period from which the amulet dates.

The Meroitic period was a turbulent time in Egyptian history during the latest era of the Egyptian civilisation, which was contemporary to the Ptolemies and Romans (Shinnie 2001: 383). It was a time in which the southern border between Egypt and Kush was in constant flux due to attempted conquests of the one over the other, which quieted only after the Romans invaded and Meroë had arranged a treaty with Augustus to set the frontier (Shinnie 2001: 383). It is unsurprising therefore, that an amulet of the deity Wepwawet represented with visible signs of aggression would find its origin in such a time.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Wepwawet was seen as a protective deity and the "opener of the ways" (Houser-Wegner 2001: 497). Generally, these three attributes – warlike nature, protective entity and opener of the ways – support Wilkinson's (2003: 191) interpretation of Wepwawet's role as the opener of the ways "before the king in terms of military conquest". Though more specifically, considering the material signification and historical context of the amulet, these qualities could similarly allow for a reading that entails protection and safe passage through the use of force if necessary.

This thesis proposes that the function of this amulet was, first, meant to invoke the presence of Wepwawet through its form; second, to provide protection and (possibly) safe passage to the bearer of the amulet as the "opener of the ways" in times of unrest; and finally, to do so through aggressive action/attacking (likely by magical means) the enemies of the bearer as was (possibly) the intent behind the display of aggression in the canine's features.

3.3. The Viewer:

The ancient Egyptians had been creating animal sculptures in the round from a very early stage (Houlihan 2002: 99), highlighting once again the absolute pervasiveness of the animal presence in the Egyptian mind. Teeter (2002a: 251) wrote that "the Egyptians could not conceive of life (and the Afterlife) without animals". The use of animal images is amongst the most prominent methods of conveying cultural and universal *meaning* (Mason 2007: 22). Although this level of awareness of animals was certainly not unique to these ancients, the Egyptian people held some distinctive views on the inherent nobility, status and power of animals' natural state of being. Gilbert (2002: 3) writes:

> Very likely, prehistoric mythology and ritual behaviour were nurtured by the lore of floral and faunal procurement, and when writing finally kindled the light of history, images and attributes of plants and animals sprung up in texts and representational art, symbolising the process of nature as well as the supernatural agents presumed responsible for creation, destruction, and renewal.

If such images representing the supernatural forces that shaped the Egyptian world view, were represented in Egyptian art, which in itself was conceived "within a matrix of symbolism and magic" (Wilkinson 1994: 7), there can be little doubt as to the level of psychological awareness invested in these images on a cultural level. Yet the question of the use of images and magic in the context of amulets falls to the individual (creator and bearer) and once again calls attention to arguments made concerning individual visual literacy.

Estimates suggest that literacy in Egypt in the traditional sense (the reading and writing of words) may have reached up to one-five percent of the general population (Lesko 2001b: 297-298). If, as Uehlinger (2000: xxv) speculates; "in the context of largely illiterate societies, minor arts had a much greater impact and larger diffusion than texts", visual literacy in Egypt – especially pertaining to those religious-magical ritual artefacts such as amulets – may perhaps have been a well-established norm. More so if one takes into account that Egyptians in their daily lives were surrounded on all sides by embedded symbolism and magic through art both small and monumental, up to and including hieroglyphs[29]. Allen's (2005: 9) sentiments demonstrate this best:

> The relics of ancient Egyptian civilisation testify to the Egyptians' perpetual efforts to understand and cope with the world they lived in. Egypt's panoply of gods explained the elements and forces that constituted and governed that world […]. The institutions and ceremonies of Egyptian religion were the means by which those forces were at once appeased and cajoled into acting for the benefit of the Egyptians themselves, in this life and the next. These perceptions and themes imbue all ancient Egyptian art, from masterpieces intended to honour the gods and kings to the most prosaic objects of everyday life.

It *seems* likely therefore, that the Egyptian people, though not necessarily literate in the traditional sense, may have had at least a moderate sense, if not a high rate of visual literacy. Amulets designed to mimic animal forms, though endowed with the symbolic

[29] See Wilkinson (1994: 7); Lesko (2001b: 297) and Junge & Behlmer (2001: 260).

supernatural properties linked to them through representation (Allen 2005: 9), were generally fundamentally informed by the Egyptians' perception of the world around them.

The observation of the mammalian instinct to protect and nurture young was the likely inspiration for the ascribed qualities to deities such as Bastet, the cat deity who was seen as a protector of infants and pregnant women (De Jong 2001: 512) as well as a mild natured mother and nurse of the king (Wilkinson 2003: 177); and Ipet and Taweret, the hippopotamus deities also associated with protective and nurturing instincts as well as childbirth (Wilkinson 2003: 184-186). What the Egyptians perceived of the world around them, informed their understanding of what 'was' (the domain of the 'known')[30] and the implication for action by assigning *meaning* to these mammalian *forms*, which was in turn transferred automatically to amulets such as the feline amulet above.

In imbuing the image of the feline or canine created in the shape of the amulet with the perceived traits of the animal observed in reality – in understanding and believing in the supernatural embodiment inherent to its form – the amulet becomes not only the creature it represents but also the supernatural entity it exemplifies (Allen 2005: 9). As such, from the Egyptian point of view, harnessing the might of the represented creature and/or the supernatural being as a way of implementing a form of control over their environment (Allen 2005: 9) and domains of experience may perhaps have been a natural reaction to situational pressure.

The extreme dangers connected to childbirth in ancient Egypt (David 2003: 360) and the requirement of the aid of deities with regard to the safety of both mother and child (Wilkinson 2003: 177, 184-186), would have made it unlikely that the everyday Egyptians would have been unaware of the significance of the images used on amulets connected to such situations. The mass production and popular use (Ikram 2005a: 11) of these amulets (such as the Bastet amulet above) demonstrate this in some part.

It therefore also appears as though, with regard to the Bastet amulet discussed above, the likelihood of the 'commercialised' treatment[31] of these amulets diminishing the importance of the image-function relationship may have been low. Possibly, the mass production of said amulets may have been a simple case of popular demand, depending in turn on the regional preference and cult adherence since private cults were common practice, beyond which many deities had dedicated cults in specific areas; such as Bubastis/Tell Basta for Bastet and Memphis for the Apis bull[32]. However, similar assurances could not necessarily be made of the canine/Wepwawet amulet.

[30] Refer to '**2.2. The Mind**'.
[31] Refer to '**1.1.2. Research Problem, Thesis Aim & Hypothesis**'.
[32] See Wilkinson (2003: 178) and Thompson (2001: 329-331).

While Egyptians *may* have understood the significance of the amulet, its material, image and its function, a claim of understanding on the part of the people of the Greco-Roman city Cyrene (where the amulet was found) could, at this point, only be debatable at best. Unlike its feline counterpart, this amulet does not appear to be part of a mass produced collection, though amulets of deities of similar composition and more or less the same time frame (Third Intermediate through Meroitic, all within the last millennium) have also been found (Andrews 1994: 41). Even if the hypothesis of this thesis as to the function of this amulet is accepted and the influence of the Egyptians on the people of Cyrene were measureable: the use of this amulet by those *possibly* outside its culture of origin and thus as an appropriation of Egyptian culture, brings into question not only the level of psychological awareness of the amuletic image's importance but also the *added* cultural significance of its contextual use.

Furthermore, even *if* the people of Cyrene were as visually literate as the Egyptians (assuming that the Egyptians' visual literacy rates could be measured), and *if* images and the use of images was a language that could be 'read' (Keel 1997: 7) then presuming that an image or images would carry the same *meaning* or fulfil the same function within various cultures would be a grave lapse in judgement. While animal traits may have influenced the meaning attributed to their images (creating somewhat universal standards) (Mason 2007: 22) the contexts within which that meaning was articulated could have differed vastly: though this golden amulet may represent a deity in Egypt, it may not necessarily have had the same worth in Cyrene. As Thompson (2001: 331) wrote: "No other aspect of Egyptian religion elicited more derision from Classical-era authors than did the worship of animals […]".

That the canine amulet was found in Cyrene where Egyptian religion may not have been prevalent means that the amulet may not have had the same intrinsic meaning or function as it would have had in Egypt. It therefore remains indeterminable whether the bearer of the Wepwawet amulet was aware of the significance of the link between the canine image and the use of the amulet as was/may have been originally intended by the amulet's creator.

3.4. Mesopotamian Felines

3.4.1. Amulet Description:

This stylised lion had been carved from shell in rather simplistic detail. The amulet as a whole has very little value in terms of realism and yet it unmistakably captures the

Figure 26: M.1.1. ca. 2900-2700 BCE, Mesopotamian lion in the round.

qualities of the animal it depicts. The haunches and tail, legs and paws, mane, facial features and ears are all clearly distinguishable. The mane, eyes and, to an extent, the ears are indicated by small holes, of which the eyes and mane still carry pigment from the materials that had been inlaid there. The lion appears to be at rest, lying with its head upon it front paws. Its tail is flush against its straight back and its stomach is somewhat distended. Its legs are tucked beneath its body, underscoring a relaxed posture. The colour of the amulet is a light sand-like brown with some much lighter areas that appear almost white. Some porous areas can be observed on the sides of the artefact, especially on the back leg.

3.4.2. Cultural Significance:

Like the Egyptians, the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian peoples of Mesopotamia were, from archaic times, very much aware of the natural world around them and the animals that inhabited it alongside them (Breniquet 2002: 157). However, contrary to the Egyptian's beliefs, animals were never used as representatives of divinity and were thus never worshipped (Breniquet 2002: 149) even though they could be and were used as symbols sometimes associated with the divine[33].

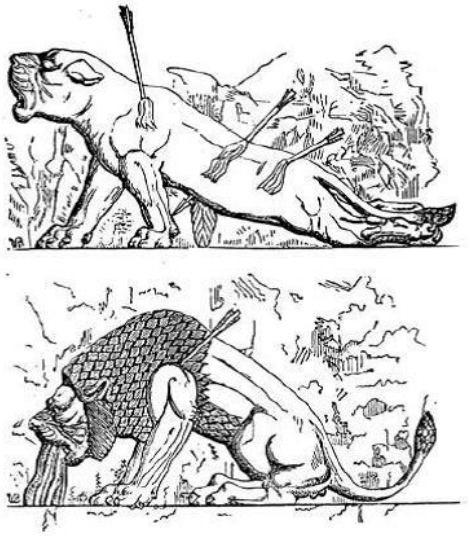

Figure 27: Lions whose bodies are pierced by arrows slowly dying from their wounds, reliefs from Nineveh (Bertman 2003: 221).

This association was nevertheless the result of an indirect link rather than direct embodiment as was the case of Ninurta and Inanna-Ištar with lions (Black & Green 1992: 118) and Gula with dogs (Bertman 2003: 119); as opposed to Sekhmet, Bastet, Anubis or Wepwawet who were not only represented by, but could appear as the animals associated with them[34]. Animals like the lion were mostly revered for their natural power and status (Gilbert 2002: 28). Yet lions were also seen as dangerous pests that often preyed on livestock and people alike (Collins 2017: 85) therefore inhabiting a precarious position in Mesopotamia, between the desired symbolic and a brutally fatal reality[35] (**Fig. 27**).

At the end of the Hunter-Gatherer period, as agriculture become more prominent, the role that hunting played within the newly developed societies changed from the necessity of

[33] See van Buren (1945a: 29-40); Black & Green (1992: 119) and Collon (2007).
[34] Refer to chapters ***3.1. Egyptian Felines*** and ***3.2. Egyptian Canines*** above.
[35] See Black & Green (1992: 118); Curtis, J. (1992); Bertman (2003: 220-221); Gilbert (2002: 27-28) and Breniquet (2002: 161).

food procurement, to the attaining of material goods such as skins, furs and feathers, the protection of domestic herds (Hughes 2007:49) (which was important not only as food for the people living in the cities, but as sustenance to the divinities who needed sacrifice and feeding twice a day (Scurlock 2002b: 389)) and eventually, sport (Bertman 2003: 247). By the time of the Assyrian kings, the hunting of lions had become a way of demonstrating one's prowess and strength (Bertman 2003: 248). Mesopotamian art was always closely related to the socio-economic landscape and as a result, Assyrian art – which held no ambiguity as to symbolic function or preference and where animals clearly represented themselves (Breniquet 2002: 145, 166) – often depicted with blunt precision the brutality with which wild animals, especially lions, were hunted to eventual extinction (Black & Green 1992: 118) (**Fig. 27** & **28**).

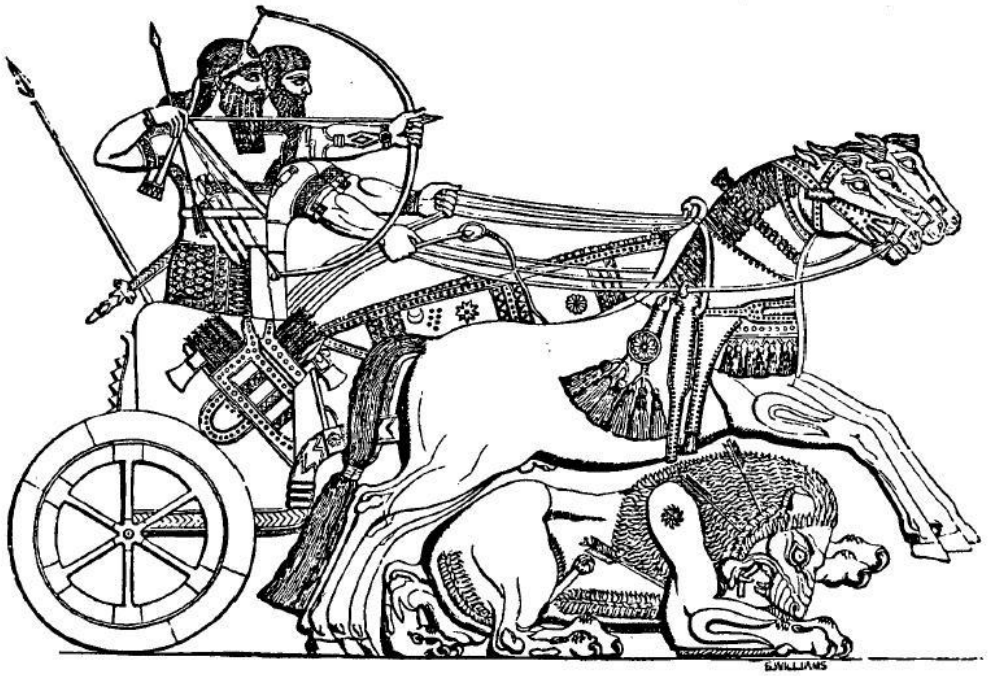

Figure 28: An Assyrian lion hunt in process (Bertman 2003: 247).

At one point the variety of feline inhabitants of this geographical region included domestic cats (*Felis catus*), lions (*Panthera leo*), panthers (*Panthera pardus*), cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) (van Buren 1939: 3-13), leopards (*Panthera pardus*) and wild cats (*Felis sylvestris*) (Gilbert 2002: 27-28). Most wild felines, with the exclusion of feral cats, are endangered or, like the lions – who are no longer free-ranging outside of Africa and India, are extinct (Gilbert 2002: 27). Before the end of the third millennium BCE lions were a common occurrence in Southern Mesopotamia, though they remained a threat from the mid-Euphrates northward (Black & Green 1992: 118). The last lions from the Mesopotamian area

were hunted and killed during the twentieth century AD and only artistic renditions or descriptions from literature remain (Black & Green 1992: 118).

This “misothery”, as Mason (2007: 38) terms it, this “hatred” or “contempt” of wild nature found in Mesopotamian (and especially Assyrian) art, was likely a duel repercussion not only of the very real threat posed by lions on a day to day basis, but also of the ingrained love/hate symbolism and ideas embedded in agrarian culture about civilisation and the naturally dominant place of humans over animals and the environment (2007: 38-41). From a symbolic perspective the bull and the lion, as icons of strength and virility, occupied an equally important position (Breniquet 2002: 158). However, as domestic and wild animals in turn, they each represented two different concepts: civilisation and *untamed* nature, one against the other (Breniquet 2002: 158). Hughes (2007: 51) writes that regional literature such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* reflect “the urban Mesopotamian sense of the distinction between the tame and the wild, between civilisation and wilderness, and shows a hitherto unfamiliar attitude of hostility toward untamed nature”. This is a perspective likely informed by the reality of geographical space and practice surrounded by religious ideas that associate frightening supernatural occurrences with an emphatic, volatile and untamed wilderness (Feldt 2016: 348-349).

As somewhat of a contradiction to this view, the reverence accorded lions in acknowledgement of their strength and ferocity, made them potent symbols of royal power (Breniquet 2002: 161) and fierce protectors in city contexts, as they were often used as guardians to doors and gateways (Watanabe 2015: 215-220). Similarly, Sumerian literature notes the human characteristics that can be found in animal behaviour and lauds the lion as an example of bravery (Foster 2002: 271). Though, humans were not the only ones who could embody the qualities observed in animals. The lion was often used to represent supernatural entities, benevolent and malevolent alike (Scurlock 2002a: 361-364). Many of these entities were “mixed beings”, having both partial human and animal bodies and limbs; human in strength but animalistic in nature (Scurlock 2002a: 361). These beings included bird-headed lions (Collins 2017: 85), the “evil *Utukkū* [who] had a lion’s head”, “*Šulak* [who] was a lion [that stood] constantly on his hind legs”, “Generic Evil (*mimma lemnu*) [who] had two heads” one of which was the head of a lion, and last but not least, the good willed lion-man (Scurlock 2002a: 361-363).

3.4.3. Material Symbolism:

The shape of this amulet clearly indicates the three-dimensional, if somewhat stylised form of a lion. As such, it is possible that this amulet could be connected in some way to deities such as Ninurta (Black & Green 1992: 118), or even Išhtar (Scurlock 2002a: 369). However,

as this amulet has no markings beyond the indicators of the natural form of the animal that is represented, this thesis would argue that the amulet was more likely meant to represent a lion in its own right: a theory that could be supported in part by taking into account that lions were a common occurrence up until the end of the third millennium BCE (Black & Green 1992: 118) and that the amulet dates back to 2900-2700 BCE. Furthermore, as animal art in Mesopotamia, more often than not, expressed a symbolic perception of the world, scholars argue that such works reflected a desire within ancient and prehistoric peoples to gain the skills personified by animals through magical means (Breniquet 2002: 158).

Rather unusually for Mesopotamian art, this lion is neither pacing whilst growling (**Fig. 15**) or sitting and roaring, nor pouncing on its prey or running (**Fig. 29**), as was considered the natural attitude of the animal (Breniquet 2002: 150-152). Mesopotamian artists often preferred to depict animals in their most salient attitudes (Breniquet 2002: 150). Instead the lion is in a docile position, on its stomach with its head on its paws, indicating that the lion is resting, if not sleeping. Similarly, the usual display of the animal's power as can be seen in the definition of the muscles (**Fig. 15, 27** & **28**) is lacking in the design of this amulet. As amulets were primarily objects intended to give magical protection, the intent behind the use of this posture of the lion, which in itself was unusual for Mesopotamian artists to use, could be read as an attempt to illicit a sense of passiveness and lack of strength in the animal. After all, lions were a constant danger in Mesopotamia (Black & Green 1992: 118), but a sleeping lion is no threat to anyone.

Figure 29: Running lion amulet, 3300-2900 BCE, Late Uruk-Jemdet Nasr period, Southern Mesopotamia (MMA: 54.20.1).

Shell ornaments were not hard to manufacture, being "one of those rare natural materials whose varied forms lent themselves very often to practical and ornamental purposes" (Moorey 1994:129). It is evident from ancient texts that shell had religious connotations (Moorey 1994: 129). However, the use of this material could possibly be better ascribed to the availability of usable resources rather than just symbolic value. This is supported somewhat in that the use of these materials for amulets were common especially during the Early Dynastic Period of Mesopotamia (Black & Green 1992: 102). The small form of the amulet, though likely for purely practical reasons, could possibly carry a specific symbolic purpose. Of Egyptian art in small or miniscule form, Wilkinson (1994: 44) writes that "hostile creatures such as the crocodile and hippopotamus are also sometimes represented at a very small scale in order to diminish their magical influence […] [as] relatively helpless looking animals [can be] easily overpowered". It is arguably not entirely out of place to suggest a similar intent here.

3.4.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

Taking into account the information that has been provided above, this thesis would propose the following interpretation of the symbolism of the amulet, the purpose of the lion image and the amulet's function.

The basic principle behind the use of the three-dimensional form of the lion in this amulet appears to be a method of invoking the lion spirit in order to lessen the danger the animal represents. Unlike the Egyptian equivalent, the image of the Mesopotamian feline is unlikely to have been intended for divine embodiment and far more orientated towards the literal animal itself, though it would be amiss to entirely rule out a divine link simply out of convenience. What supports the view that the amulet was meant to represent only the animal, is that in spite of some symbolic connections to deities such as Ištar (Scurlock 2002a: 369) Mesopotamian animal art appears to have been mostly intent on depicting the natural world as it was observed (Breniquet 2002: 150) unless distinctly and/or symbolically indicated otherwise.

In creating this lion amulet in-the-round it was, therefore, likely meant not only to provide the bearer of the amulet with the attributes often associated with the animal through magic (Breniquet 2002: 158), but possibly, also to give power over the animal itself through the same means. As such, the added material signification of the amulet would then provide the magical intent of the artefact:

This thesis would argue that the resting posture of the lion in the amulet was intended to evoke a passiveness or calmness about the animal that would then help protect the barer from any lion attacks. As stated above, the presupposed logic of such an argument would hinge on the magic of the amulet working in such a way that it could control the lion and place the animal in a submissive or disinterested state so that it would not attack. Should this theory be accepted, the added implication of the amulet's diminutive size would contribute to this symbolic function. For if, as Wilkinson (1994: 44) suggests, size could act as a diminishing factor in cases of animalistic aggression, the small size of the amulet combined with the resting or sleeping posture that the animal has, completely takes away the threat that the lion may pose. Added to this, the material from which the amulet was made was breakable, unlike cold metals, the amulet would then give the bearer complete control over the animal it represents.

Therefore, this thesis argues that ***M.1.1.*** was meant to aid in the protection against lion attacks by embodying the animals and, through symbolism and magic, give the bearer control over the animal and the attributes it personified.

3.5. Mesopotamian Canines

3.5.1. Amulet Description:

Figure 30: M.2.1. ca. 9th-8th century BCE, Mesopotamian dog in the round.

This metalwork-sculpture of a canine is very roughly hewn, showing only the necessary inclination towards those aspects that would allow for an identification of what kind of animal this is. The shape of the head, ears, body, legs, paws and tail are identifiable. However, there is no indication of facial features such as eyes, a nose or a muzzle. Some level of emotion is still conveyed through posture. The dog stands squared on all fours, head and ears pointed forward attentively, showing that it is alert. The legs of the dog are somewhat shorter than is usually depicted and the tail appears to be curled. It is made of bronze and has, overall, a shining dark brown surface.

3.5.2. Cultural Significance:

> I am mighty in strength, the talon of a thunderbird, the fury(?) of a lion,
> My legs run faster than birds on the wing.
> At my loud outcry mountains and rivers dry up(?),
> I take my onerous place before the sheep,
> Their lives are entrusted to me, instead of to shepherds or herdsmen,
> I am sent off on my regular path in the open country and the watering place, I go around the fold.
> At the clash of my fearsome weapons I flush out …,
> At my baying, panther, tiger, lion, wild cat take to flight,
> The bird can[not] fly away nor go on course!
>
> (Foster 1996: 821)[36]

This translation of an Akkadian tale indicates the importance of the domestic canine as a trusted care-taker and protector in Mesopotamian agrarian culture, through the words of a dog who recounts his inherent and prevailing importance for the herding and guarding of

[36] Also quoted by Foster (2002: 281).

sheep (livestock) (Foster 2002: 281). Even before the settlement of the Sumerians, the relationship between the domestic canines and the people who lived in the region of southern Mesopotamia, had been firmly cemented: a fact noted through the discoveries of burial sites such as the one at Eridu, where a dog had been buried beside a young boy, a bone placed in the grave beside it as a tribute of continued sustenance throughout the afterlife (Rice 2006: 8). This bond continued to be important throughout Mesopotamian history, and the domestic dog, represented in art such as the amulet above, existed symbiotically with human beings as loyal companions, symbols of protection and associated sacred animals to divinities, especially those deities connected to the healing arts[37].

Figure 31: A depiction of the deity Gula and her dog from a carving on a *kudurru* dated to the reign of the Babylonian king Nabû-mukîn-apli, 978-943 BCE (Black & Green 1992: 101).

The canines that inhabited this geographical region included the wolf (*Canis lupus*), the jackal (*Canis aureus*), the hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*), the fox (*Vulpes reuppelli* & *Fennecus zerda*) and the domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*)[38]. The breeding of the *Canis familiaris* into subsequent subspecies, that would be distinguishable even today, has been an attested tradition in Mesopotamia since prehistoric times[39]. As representatives of numerous deities, amulets in the shape of domestic dogs could be used in various ways. They could be offered as dedications to deities to earn favour (Black & Green 1992: 81), could be placed under doorways and gates to protect and defend certain areas (Scurlock 2002a: 364) or perhaps even be placed in the homes as protection against malevolent spirits (Muscarella 1988: 315).

[37] See Black & Green (1992: 70); Breniquet (2002: 154) and Bertman (2003: 119).
[38] See van Buren (1939: 13-20); Black & Green (1992: 70) and Gilbert (2002: 26-27).
[39] See van Buren (1939: 14) and Gilbert (2002: 27).

The deities associated with this breed of canine include Ninkilim, Marduk (Muscarella 1988: 316) and the divinity Gula (Bertman 2003: 119), to name but a few. Of these, the latter was best known for her association with the beloved companions (Wasserman 2008: 80-81) and her "dog temple" (named *E-gal-mah* (Black & Green 1992: 101)) at Isin revealed large amounts of dedicatory canine amulets and figurines (Scurlock 2002a: 369). Thirty-three burial graves of dogs were also found (Scurlock 2002a: 369). Though ordinary dogs were not allowed in her temples, certain canines who were seen as representative of their mistress or used as surrogates were allowed to enter and were also entitled to burial on temple grounds (Scurlock 2002a: 369). Other temples dedicated to Gula were found at Nippur, Borsippa and Aššur (Black & Green 1992: 101). Also known as Gula-Ninkarrak, Meme, Nintinuga (Black & Green 1992: 101) and Ninisina (Muscarella 1988: 316), she was worshipped as the "goddess of healing and [the] defender of homes" (Lines 1955: 242). She was often depicted as seated on a chair, with her sacred animal seated beside her (**Fig. 31**). However, a lone dog in a seated position supporting the symbol of the crook could also signify the divinity (Black & Green 1992: 70).

Figure 32: Clay dog figurine from Nineveh, c. 645 BCE (BM: 30005).

Dogs were also used by Assyrian kings as loyal hunting companions (Albenda 2008: 70) and figurines who were in a seated or standing position, without any added divine symbols beside them such as ***M.2.1.***, were also believed to be magically protective amulets (Black & Green 1992: 70). Many such amulets have been discovered across Mesopotamia and most date from the late second and first millennium BCE (Muscarella 1988: 316). Multiple examples were located under the foundations of doors and gateways where the canines were buried, some of which were inscribed[40] (**Fig. 32** & ***M.4.3.***). ***M.2.1.*** was discovered in a well with many other bronze dogs, a cat and other finely carved ivory artefacts (Muscarella 1988: 315). Scholars believe that these objects were thrown into the well by the destroyers of Nimrud (Muscarella 1988: 315).

As these canine amulets were found not beneath the doors of a temple or home, or even the gates of a city, but disposed of within a well, it is likely that they were either used as dedicatory amulets in temples (Scurlock 2002a: 369) or as amulets meant to invoke the spirits of dogs as protectors in other buildings such as people's homes, against malevolent entities and demons like *Lamaštu* (Scurlock 2002a: 364).

[40] Lines (1955: 242-243); Muscarella (1988); Black & Green (1992: 70).

3.5.3. Material Symbolism:

Though the basic form of the animal represented in the amulet's shape can be clearly discerned, the lack of detail in the finer points of this canine's features contrasts strikingly with that of its Egyptian counterpart. Nevertheless, the legs, body, tail and head appear to indicate a domestic canine, which in so doing hints at a possible association with divinity; likely Gula, as her affinity with the *Canis familiaris* was an integral part of her cultic identity (Black & Green 1992: 101). This is further supported by the multitude of similar dedicatory amulets that were found at her temple at Isin (Scurlock 2002a: 369). As such, it is quite possible that the amulet was meant to earn her co-operation and/or protection in some way or other. It would also explain why the amulet was not buried under a building, but rather appeared to be free standing, allowing it to be disposed of at a later time when the city was destroyed (Muscarella 1988: 315).

The posture of the canine in the amulet is attentive. The animal stands squared on all fours, its head faced forward and its ears pricked and alert. This, like the canine amulet of Wepwawet above, shows that the animal is poised for action. As dogs were associated with and seen as protective spirits in Mesopotamia (Black & Green 1992: 70), it is likely that the animal's posture was meant to convey the ability for immediate action in case of danger. There appears to be a general awareness of this and many canine amulets bear this kind of posture (**Fig. 32**, **33** and ***M.4.3.***). The inscriptions found on other such amulets of similar form and use in various Mesopotamian cities support this view[41]. This thesis would propose that this aspect of the amulet, though not an exclusive result of association with divinity, connects with the attributes associated with Gula as the "defender of homes" (Lines 1955: 242).

Figure 33: Canine pendant amulet, 3300-2900 BCE (MMA: 1995.329).

The material from which the amulet was made (bronze) is an alloy that originates from the combination of copper and tin (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001a: 200). It is unclear whether bronze had any deeper value to it culturally other than as a metal that could be used for various purposes. It was especially adept for casting, since it did not shrink as much as copper (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001a: 200). Bronze also "inhibits porosity, lowers the firing temperature and increases fluidity […] [while] being harder and stronger than copper" (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001a: 200). It may, therefore, have been significantly more valuable than copper economically, yet its symbolic value remains unclear. However, as a metal

[41] Refer to **5.3. The Dogs of Nineveh, Mesopotamia**.

known for its durability and strength, it is possible that it could have been used to symbolically strengthen either the magic of the amulet or the animal spirit it meant to invoke.

In the case of this amulet, much like the Egyptian feline amulet above, the size may once again have more to do with its function than any symbolic signification.

3.5.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

In light of the information presented above, this thesis offers the following interpretation of ***M.2.1.***'s amuletic function, the meaning of the animal image and its symbolism:

In essence, the principle function of the amulet appears to be the protection of a place or person through the invocation of the canine spirit, whether associated with divinity or otherwise (Black & Green 1992: 70). This would have been achieved through the three-dimensional shape in which the image of the canine had been created; much like the lion counterpart in the previous chapter. That this amulet does not appear to be part of a specifically numbered group of amulets, such as is the case with ***M.4.3.***, indicates that the origin of the amulet's protective properties likely stems from something other than numbered formations[42]. This thesis proposes therefore that the protective aspect of the amulet's function stems from the amulet's connection with the deity Gula, based on the following interpretation of the information at hand:

Canine figurines buried in numbered groups or 'packs' beneath the gates, doors and entryways to specific areas, such as ***M.4.3.***, were believed to be capable of overpowering enemies, both mundane and supernatural, attempting to enter said places. This is due in part to the added divine power of the numbers involved in the use of such amulets; such as the numbers five or seven, which were seen as sacred numbers (Black & Green 1992: 144). That it remains unclear whether this specific canine amulet and the other discarded bronze canines that was found in the well (Muscarella 1988: 315), had been meant to be used with some of the other bronze amulets as either group amulets, or as mass produced, single (perhaps dedicatory) amulets, indicates that it was entirely possible that ***M.2.1.*** could have been used for protective purposes on its own.

As a single, freestanding amulet that could be placed inside a building, like a palace, a temple or a home, the canine spirit invoked in this amulet (***M.2.1.***) could offer protection against malevolent spirits *within* the walls of a structure; such as those demons who were believed capable of infecting people with, and causing diseases (Black & Green 1992: 63). With the alert posture of the animal in the amulet's form indicating, as with real canines, the animal's awareness of its surroundings, the canine spirit invoked with the amulet would be

[42] Refer to **5.3. The Dogs of Nineveh, Mesopotamia**.

able to take immediate action against such malicious forces. In this way then, ***M.2.1.*** could be considered linked to the divinity Gula, not only as it takes the form of her associated animal companion (Scurlock 2002a: 369), but also as a possible dedication to ascertain the divinity's protection as the "goddess of healing and defender of homes" (Lines 1955: 242).

This thesis would therefore conclude that the function of this amulet was primarily to provide protection to a specific place as a freestanding amulet, that was meant to invoke the canine spirit as a protective guardian as well as the protection of the deity Gula.

3.6. The Viewer:

In the ancient Mesopotamian world "there were animalian spirits and spirited animals [and] living animals served as conduits of communication between men and gods" (Scurlock 2002a: 361). However, animals in Mesopotamia served as more than just the link to divinity; through the observation and understanding of animal's character traits, their reactions to circumstances and their instinctive way of life, animal symbols, similes and metaphors had become a prominent method of conveying *meaning* (Mason 2007: 22). The constant presence of animals in peoples' minds and cultures is most apparent in art and is the reason why animal stories and *images* resonate so strongly (Mason 2007: 20-22).

> In expressive or communicative literature, animals shared with human beings attributes such as youth, old age and mortality; pride, anger aggressiveness, pain and fear; domesticity, discipline and vulnerability. Certain animals stood for human qualities, such as the lion or bull connoting bravery and aggression […]. Like human beings, animals could be foreign or native, could have individual traits and emotions, families, and personal names. As chattels, animals could be created, destroyed, bought, and sold; they could bring wealth, prestige, protection or healing. In contrast to humans, animals were not organised into a hierarchical society, showed no clear ethical or moral differentiations or gradations in capability or intelligence within the same class, and were protected by the gods rather than owing them service. […] Although manipulated and exploited as part of the divinely ordained physical world, animals could arouse in human beings a fear of the numinous as well as empathetic response.
>
> (Foster 2002: 271-272).

The difference here between Egypt and Mesopotamia is not only ideological but also cultural. Ideological, in that the Egyptian amulets above have clear-cut connections to

specific divinities and therefore, are associated with the conditions that invoke the presence, protection, power and manifestation of the divine. Furthermore, much more is known about the use of amulets and how they relate to religious practices in Egypt, than Mesopotamia. Cultural, in that the land between the rivers held no single, unified nation – and though each culture that developed along the river borders were undoubtedly influenced by the other, the effects were quite different from that in Egypt.

An impediment to the study of the two Mesopotamian amulets above is not only the likely variation in tradition but also the limited amount of information available. Though the canine amulet – through dating, place of origin and shared practices[43] can be determined as Assyrian, much less is known about the feline amulet. Predating its canine counterpart by two millennia, the place of origin is uncertain (limited geographically to Southern Mesopotamia) and its purpose an estimate at best. Added on top of this is the question now of the rate of visual literacy in Mesopotamian cultures.

In Assyria, at least, before the reign of Ashurbanipal II the focus of large scale art, such as palace reliefs, was predominantly occupied with "mythological scenes and cultic symbols" both of which would have required previous knowledge of the cultural ideas and customs in order to be understood (Bonfiglio 2016: 45). The shift towards the historical narrative only happened in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, as such themes could be understood more easily and were thus used "to foster a common political consciousness among a more diverse array of subjects" (Bonfiglio 2016: 45-46). However, the themes that dominated the Assyrian palaces of the time were vastly different from those found in minor art such as seals (Collon 1987: 75) and amulets. If, as Mitchell (2008: 11) suggests, visual literacy requires "the acquisition of skills, competence, and expertise [similar] […] to the mastery of language and literature", it *seems* unlikely that a political region as diverse as Ashurbanipal II's Assyria would have had a wide-spread rate of visual literacy at least with reference to the general populace and especially minor art.

With regards to the canine amulet from Nimrud, however, this thesis would offer the following counter argument: First, the discussion in the previous paragraph focusses predominantly on the more complicated, narrative-type images often found on monolithic reliefs and the smaller, more intricate cylinder seals. In these, the presentation of the images in an often multi-layered, symbolic narrative style would logically have required more insight into the cultural inheritance of the display, unless it depicted an event or story widely known at the time. Perhaps as a reaction to this conundrum, the intended outcome of the preferred historical narratives of the later Assyrian art may have been to utilise simplification as a means of "lowering the threshold of visual literacy" (Bonfiglio 2016: 47). Both the feline and

[43] See **5.3. The Dogs of Nineveh, Mesopotamia**

canine amulets presented in this section consist of single images sculpted in the round – which should have made them more accessible to ancient audiences.

Furthermore, this thesis has argued that the canine amulet should be understood through its connection to the female deity Gula. Despite being a Babylonian divinity, her presence in Assyria is well attested, as can be seen in the plethora of cylinder seals, stamp seals and other artworks that survive (**Fig. 34**). This further supports the theory that the ancient peoples at Nimrud would very likely have been aware of the symbolic meaning behind the use of the canine image in ***M.2.1.***

Figure 34: Gula and her dog on an Assyrian stamp seal, 700-600 BCE (BM: 130814).

Finally, as has been suggested previously, it was often the way of Mesopotamian artists to depict animals in their natural state, rendering them in the act best associated with their nature (Breniquet 2002: 150). As common as the domesticated canine was in ancient Mesopotamia (Black & Green 1992: 70), their value as protective creatures would not have gone unnoticed – hence their employment in the use of guarding property and livestock (Foster 2002: 281). The domain of the *'known*', their understanding of the dog and its place and function within society, would have been fundamentally informed by people's interaction with and experience of the animal. Therefore, even without an association with Gula; an amulet in the shape of a domestic canine (as an object with the primary function of protection – combined in *form* with a known animal of similar properties) could not believably have been misinterpreted by an audience who would (excluding the truly foreign exception) have known by way of experience what the symbolic function of the *image* and the amulet had been.

Thus this thesis proposes that visual literacy in Mesopotamia, with regards to simplified minor art such as ***M.2.1.*** and similar artefacts may have been more wide-spread than with larger, complicated works or the more intricate cylinder seals, which would have required more cultural sentiency. On the other hand, the awareness and understanding invested in ***M.1.1.*** may be harder to determine.

The lion amulet from the southern region of Mesopotamia dates back to the Early Dynastic I (ED I) Period (ca. 3000-2330 BCE) and the independent city-states of the Sumerians (Stiebing 2009: 43). As lions were still common in the region during this time (Black & Green 1992: 118), the people living in the Sumerian city-states would have been very aware of the possible threat the animals posed on a daily basis (Gilbert 2002: 28). The *image* of the lion would have been recognisable to anyone living in the area; rather, it would

have been the *meaning* attributed to the image and its impact on the object's use (the implication for behaviour[44]) that is questionable.

It is unclear whether the early city-states had variations in their treatment of lion imagery and its inherent meaning or even their application with regards to the use of amulets and other forms of minor art. However, there does appear to be a general awareness of the animal's volatile and violent temperament (Gilbert 2002: 28) that can be perceived on various depictions in ED I art, e.g. where lions are often depicted in aggressive battles with bull-men (Molinari & Sisci 2016: 7). The fear evoked by the hostility, unpredictability and imminent danger that lions posed, and the symbolic association of untamed nature (Breniquet 2002: 158), made them potent symbols of power that would have been recognisable to many of the ancient Sumerians.

In this regard, widespread understanding of the function of such images as visual literacy *may* have been substantial. Yet, despite the simplicity of the lion image found in ***M.1.1.***, it does not adhere to this view. Rather, the feline image found in the shape of the amulet, is that of a *reclining* lion, *not* an attacking one. The feline amulet has no trace of aggression in its form at all, which makes it fundamentally different from depictions of lions elsewhere in Sumerian (and broader Mesopotamian) art[45]. If one were to accept the hypothesis that this thesis presents as to the function and/or use of this amulet in the previous chapters as the best probability, combined with the highly uncharacteristic shape of the feline form, it seems less likely that the intrinsic meaning of the image and its relation to the function of the amulet would have been widely understood.

3.7. Deductions:

The aim of this third chapter has been to determine the level of consciousness invested the use of specific images and their influence on the function/use of an amulet; in this case the focus was three-dimensional mammalian images. Given the information presented in the arguments above, the following inferences can be made about the canine and feline images, their function, meaning and influence with regards to the use of amulets in their respective cultural environments:

The Egyptian feline amulet appears to have a clear association with the deity Bastet and likely served as a protective amulet meant to invoke the divinity's protection and aid. The amulet could similarly have served to provide a form for the embodiment of the deity to offer a more 'active' or 'powerful' manifestation of their presence. The danger associated with childbirth was a powerful and frightening unknown in ancient Egypt, as it was never

[44] Refer to **2.2. The Mind**.
[45] Refer to **3.4.2. Cultural Significance**.

certain if either the mother or the child would survive. The amulet was an active attempt on the part of the individual to exert control over their environment by seeking the aid of the divine. Thus the implication for action imbedded in the function of the amulet is the circumvention of the dangers associated with pregnancy and childbirth; the apparent visual comprehension of this symbolism indicates a deliberate use of imagery, and therefore significant conscious investment with regard to the image-function relationship of the amulet.

The Egyptian canine amulet seems to have a similar divine connection likely to the deity Wepwawet and a similar hypothetical intent at divine manifestation is estimated. It is more probable, however, that the original intent behind the individual's attempt at circumstantial control would have been aimed at securing safety during a volatile time of war. Therefore this thesis proposes that the implication for action central to the function of the amulet may have been to secure safe passage from an attack. Nevertheless, since the amulet was essentially appropriated into another culture, estimation of the comprehension of the symbolic value of the amuletic imagery, and by extension the awareness invested in its use, is indeterminable at this stage.

The feline amulet from the southern region of Mesopotamia does not seem to share the trait of divine manifestation with its Egyptian counterparts. Rather the anticipated protection of the amulet appears to have been aimed at the embodiment of the represented animal instead. It may well have been intended for the bearer of the amulet to gain the strength of the lion through the amulet's shape or to gain power or control over the animal so as to be protected from a lion's attack. As such, the implication for action invested in the function of the amulet could have been to provide strength and protection from and by the power attributed to lions. Yet, as the characteristics and representation of the animal in the amulet are both highly individualistic, it remains uncertain how personal or public the understanding of the inherent symbolism would have been – and thus to what degree the influence of the feline image would have determined the amulet's use.

The Assyrian canine amulet, though possibly bearing a divine connection, like its feline companion does not appear to be aimed at actual divine manifestation. More simply, it seems to warrant divine intervention through association and guardianship through its animal form. If, as theorised in this thesis the amulet was used to drive away harmful forces both supernatural and mundane the individual's attempt at control rests in the idea of preventing access to certain entities that may cause harm, thereby creating 'safe-zones'. The implication for action vested in the function of the amulet was to block and attack dangerous enemies. Since such amulets were common in Assyria, it is very likely that its symbolism would have been widely understood and therefore indicates significant conscious investment with regard to the image-function relationship of the amulet.

At least two of the four amulets in this chapter can be viewed as prime examples of the phenomenon this thesis has chosen to investigate. Yet these amulets were rather straight forward in this and other amulets may not have the same value or significance. The next chapter will focus on just two such amulets.

4. Reflecting Representation

Very few aspects of the human-self have garnered as much fascination throughout the ages as the human eye. From the earliest artistic developments in the prehistoric world, the eyes were among the first parts of the smaller anatomical features of living beings to be emphasised (e.g. **Fig. 35**) in various works across the globe (Watson 2011: 89-90).

Figure 35: (Left to Right) Amulet in the shape of a man, Hippopotamus Ivory, Naqada II, ca. 3800-3300 BCE (Teeter 2011: 218); Female figurine, Ivory, Naqada I, ca. 4000-3500 BCE (Malek 1999: 48)

Examples of the symbolic social importance and universal cultural awareness of these organs can be seen in the "humanised jaguars" with almond-shaped eyes that are prominent traits of Olmec art, 1800-400 BCE (Cyphers 2014: 1005); in the "serpent-like animal [ ], with whiskers and forked tongue, but human oval eyes, nose and eyebrows" of Pucara stelae, ca. 200 BCE-200 CE (Isbell 2014: 1114); in the substituting of the eyes with shell beads in the skulls of adults in some burial mounds of the Algonquians, 1000 BCE-1500 CE (Williamson 2014: 1316); the Okunevo stelae depicting "images with three eyes, […] and ornate headgear resembling beasts", ca. 2000-1500 BCE (Molodin & Polos'mak 2014: 1645); the human figurines of the "Goddess Temple", from the Hongshan site in North China, with inlaid jade eyes, ca. 4500-3000 BCE (Cohen & Murowchick 2014: 801) and in the Levantine Yarmukian figurines with "extremely stylised" bodies and "large prominent cowrie-shell eyes", ca. 6400-5800 BCE (Garfinkel 2014: 1441) – to name but a few.

Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia are hardly exempt: rather, eye symbols in ancient

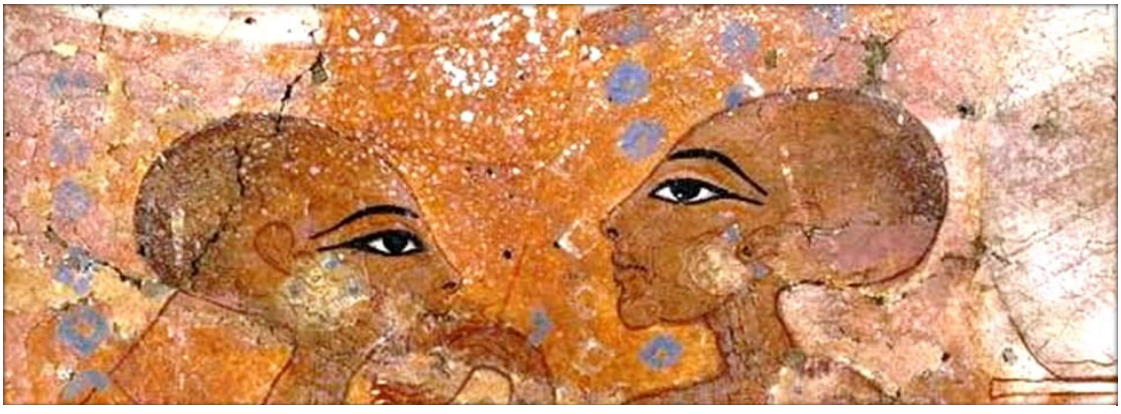

Figure 36: The Daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, c. 1345 BCE (Malek 1999: 281)

Egypt were often associated with divinity (Müller-Winkler 1987: 93) and the enlarged, staring eyes of votive Mesopotamian statues are a characteristic stylistic feature of the art (Winter 2000: 22). The enlarging of the eyes was often a marker of the natural response to the presence of awe-inspiring divinity[46]. Similarly, the prominence of eyes in other West Asian societies can be seen through examples such as the Disc-Figurines from Kültepe[47] and the Tell Asmar Statue Hoard[48]. Therefore, the fourth chapter of this thesis will focus on eye imagery in amulets from Egypt and Mesopotamia, specifically paying attention to two-dimensional illustrations over sculpture in the round.

4.1. The Egyptian *Wedjat eye*

4.1.1. Amulet Description:

Figure 37: E.3.2. ca. 332-30 BCE, Egyptian *wedjat eye*.

This *wedjat eye* consists entirely of gold. It comprises of a flat surface on top of which the design of the eye has been depicted. The display is only in the front of the amulet as the right eye. The stylised image contains a human eye as the focus, with a cosmetic line around the lids leading away from the outer corner and away from the eye. Above the eye various decorative lines have been formed with gold-like beads; the first line through clusters of beads in a somewhat diamond-like formation, the second line through triangle shaped clusters and the final line – the thickest and most solid of the three – appear to be made of three braided/ twisted strands of gold in a pattern that looks much like a modern zipper. These lines, in the order they were mentioned here, were possibly meant to indicate the fold of the eyelid and the brow. Above this three suspension loops have been placed, each with a flower on the front. Directly beneath the eye, seven vertical lines extend downward into a rounded end. To the left of these a single line moves down from the bottom lid of the eye diagonally and ends in a spiral. This line has more clustered beads in triangular shapes above it. Leading up from the spiral and to the far left of the eye, three more triangles have been designed; the smallest two on the outer left and right consist entirely of the same gold bead clusters used throughout; the centre triangle, and the largest of the three, is made up of two straight lines – bended in a triangular shape – that have been interchanged with two lines made of beads.

[46] Winter (2000: 36) as referenced by Cornelius (2017: 134).
[47] Zeidenberg (1989), as quoted by Cooper (2016: 31).
[48] Rothman (2004), as quoted by Cooper (2016: 31).

4.1.2. Cultural Significance:

The *wedjat* (*Udjat*) *eye*, or 'eye of Horus', was amongst the most popular amulets to be used in ancient Egypt (Allen 2005: 27). The image of the *wedjat* is usually stylised in the shape of an open human eye and the extensions attached to the lower edge of the eyelid have often been associated with an Egyptian hawk, or the eye of the hawk (Müller-Winkler 1987: 93). Despite its human appearance, the protection that the symbol offered was as that of the eye of divinity, not a mundane eye (Müller-Winkler 1987: 93).

Figure 38: The *Hypocephalus*, Late Period (BM: EA 35875).

The symbolic meaning of the eye is considered to be linked to both the rising and the setting of the sun as well as the waning and waxing moon as "the one eye of the heavenly deity" (Müller-Winkler 1987: 93-94). The sun and moon association was, however, usually (though not exclusively) reserved for the combination of the left and right eye (Donnelly 1999: 81). Mythologically, the icon is traditionally related to the story of the destruction of Horus's eye and its regeneration (Allen 2005: 27); resulting not only in the associated properties of renewal and healing of the symbol itself (Allen 2005: 10), but also in the belief that anyone, living or dead, who bears the image would be granted the same power through magic (Müller-Winkler 1987: 94).

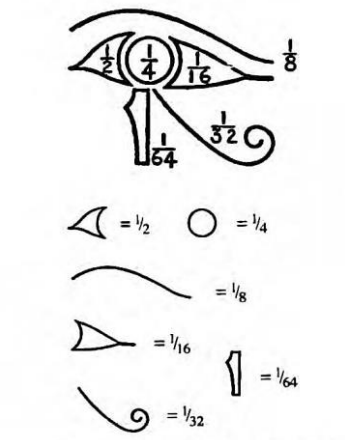

Figure 39: The Horus Eye Notations of Fractions (Grandet 2001: 494).

In the myth in which the *wedjat* eye became associated with Horus as the son of Osiris (as opposed to the elder creator deity and celestial falcon), Horus offered his healed eye to his deceased father (Andrews 1994: 43). The magic imbued in it was powerful enough to resurrect Osiris (Andrews 1994: 43). As such it was believed that the power of the *wedjat* eye was so great that an offering of the *wedjat* would suffice even over food offerings in the daily ritual (Andrews 1994: 43).

Another mythological connection tied to the image of the *wedjat* is also linked to the concept of the *hypocephalus* (**Fig. 38**). A funerary amulet from the late period with the shape of a disk that used to be placed under the head, focussed within the idea of the solar cycle and bearing depictions of Amon-Re, the *hypocephalus* represents the eternal renewal of all things within the solar cycle and "offers the deceased the *d.t*-eternity" (Mekis 2020: 26). "By

depicting Amon-Re with four ram heads [ ] and by juxtaposing to this image the meeting of the two heavenly bodies [ ], the creation of the life-giving light and energy was powerfully expressed" (Mekis 2020: 26). This disc shaped *hypocephalus* with the four-ram-headed Amon-Re at the centre has been identified with the "Amon-Re, who hides himself in his iris" type, which is related to the *wedjat* eye's iris (Mekis 2020: 31)[49]. In this theological context, the iris of the *wedjat* is the *hypocephalus* solar cycle in which Amon-Re hides himself within the protection of Sekhmet, who was known as "the furious eye of Re" (Mekis 2020: 31). "Sekhmet becomes the protector of the sun-god by hiding him by her fire during the day, and so the goddess may be identified with the personification of the *wedjat*-eye as well by night" (Mekis 2020: 31).

The *wedjat* eye therefore clearly has very intricate symbolic relations within ancient Egyptian religion and is meaningfully intertwined with several divinities. So pervasive was this image in everyday life that it was even used as a notation system (see **Fig. 39**) – a use likely derived from the aforementioned myth in which Thoth, the "god of knowledge, mathematics, and fair accounting" restored the eye of Horus after its initial destruction (Grandet 2001: 493). It was also ceremonially offered to the divinities of Egypt in many of the major temples (Pinch 2010: 110).

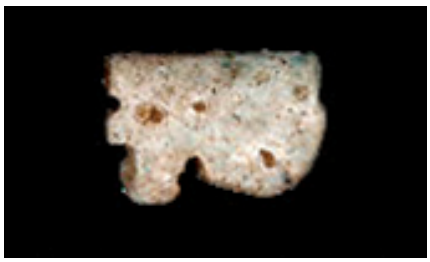

Figure 410: Plain *wedjat* eye amulet, PMEA, UC52396 (Furlan et. al 2019: 106).

Figure 401: Double 'mirrored' *wedjat* eye amulet (Pinch 2010: 109).

As a funerary amulet, the *wedjat*'s powerful protective magic was often used to prevent malevolent forces from entering the body of the deceased by placing a plate on which the image was depicted over the embalming incision (Andrews 1994: 43). It was also believed that the amuletic plate would magically heal the incision itself (Andrews 1994: 43). As the mummification process was an important ritual to purify, regenerate and deify the dead, it is unsurprising that the Pyramid Texts directly link the linen used to wrap the bodies of the deceased with the *wedjat* eye (Taylor 2010: 108-109); even going so far as to say that the linen had been made from the *wedjat* eye (Taylor 2010: 108).

Somewhere between the Third Intermediate Period and the Ptolemaic Period, the variation in funerary amulets increased drastically and the use of the older amuletic types such as the *wedjat* was augmented as well (Taylor 2010: 110). Usually the *wedjat* amulet

[49] See also Teeter (2011: 166) "Evidence for Magical Practices".

was worn (by both the living and the dead (Andrews 1994: 43)) somewhere on the body and was typically suspended either through loops that were added to it, or by perforating a hole straight through the object itself (Müller-Winkler 1987: 97). Though, sometimes, in funerary practices *wedjat* amulets were simply placed on top of the body in groups or even distributed over the mummified corpse in elaborate arrangements (Taylor 2010: 110).

The design of the *wedjat* amulet can usually be divided into one of a few categories. Stylistically these amulets are typically found to be decorated either on one side only (left or right facing) (see ***E.3.2.***) or on both sides of the amulet (back and front) (Müller-Winkler 1987: 97). They can also appear with only the outlined shape of the *wedjat* and no inner decoration (see **Fig. 40**). Single eye amulets are characteristically found to face either to the right or the left, of which the ones facing right such as ***E.3.2.*** are the most common after the double sided amulets (Müller-Winkler 1987: 97). Other types of this amulet include the combined *wedjat* eyes that are shown to have varying combinations of three to four *wedjat* eyes as part of the same amulet (Müller-Winkler 1987: 98). The quadruple eye amulets are often organised so that the eyes form mirrored images of one another (see **Fig. 41**).

4.1.3. Material Symbolism:

E.3.2. is a single sided, right facing, gold *wedjat* eye amulet. In Chapter **3.2.3.** the value and significance of gold to the ancient Egyptians has already been mentioned briefly. Markowitz & Lacovara (2001b: 37) writes:

> Throughout the course of Egyptian history, gold remained a substance of supreme value – a symbol of the gods, a guarantee of immortality, an emblem of prestige, a key to power and an enhancer of beauty. Revered, traded, gifted, stolen, recycled and demanded as tribute, gold was a cultural obsession – a preoccupation that continues to influence our own attitudes toward the land of the Nile.

Though many materials were used throughout Egyptian history to make *wedjat* eyes, the most common material that was utilised was glazed faience (Müller-Winkler 1987: 95). Other more common materials included glass, polychrome, feldspar, lapis lazuli, amethyst, sard, cornelian, chalcedony, obsidian and serpentine, to name a few (Andrews 1994: 44). Gold, though not uncommon in amulets was a rarer substance that was difficult (or at least, dangerous) to mine (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 34-36) and was therefore not used as much as the other materials. The use of gold in this amulet, as an imperishable substance that stood as a metaphor for eternal life (Wilkinson 1994: 83), would have exponentially

increased the power of the amulet and provided eternal rejuvenation, regeneration and protection to its bearer (Allen 2005: 27).

What makes ***E.3.2.*** even more meaningful symbolically is that the right facing, single eyed amulets were preferred because of their religious-magical associations (Müller-Winkler 1987: 97). All *wedjat* eyes carry the same stylised human eye shape with the markings of the hawk's eye, but it was the right eye that was seen as the healed eye of Horus and was known as "the sound one" (Allen 2005: 27).

Furthermore, this particular *wedjat* eye was used in combination with another, also made of gold, as part of the same necklace (see **Fig. 42**) (Allen 2005: 27). Together they would have served their owner as a guarantee of well-being and protectors against forces that would threaten one's health (Allen 2005: 27). More importantly, "Egyptian scholars and theologians saw the relationship between similar words or objects as more than merely 'coincidental', and as a reflection of order, design and meaning in the world" (Wilkinson 1994: 126). That numbers appear to have cultural-religious significance to the Egyptians in their own way, seems almost undeniable; though it is important to note that numbers in literature and numbers represented in the arts did not necessarily hold the same symbolic status (Wilkinson 1994: 127).

Figure 42: Gold *wedjat* amulet, companion to ***E.3.2.*** (Allen 2005: 26-27).

Some numbers, such as 2, 3, & 4 were very much significant in and of themselves, but they generally did not necessarily add anything towards context (Wilkinson 1994: 129). In the instance of ***E.3.2.*** and its companion amulet, this may not entirely be the case. Two, was the number of duality and unity to the ancient Egyptians and "is at the heart of the Egyptian concept of the universe itself" (Wilkinson 1994: 129). The number two represents the complimentary nature and harmonisation of opposites towards the whole (Wilkinson 1994: 129), similar in a way to the concept of yin & yang. Mythologically this dichotomy is sometimes expressed representationally through male and female elements (Wilkinson 1994: 129).

With regards to *wedjat* amulets, it has been noted that the combined use of two *wedjat* eyes was used to represent the healing power of the 'sound eye' of Horus as well as the protective power of Sekhmet/Bastet, "the fearsome goddess who was the eye of Re" (Pinch 2010: 110). Even though Bastet and Sekhmet were essentially two parts of the same coin (especially by the time ***E.3.2.*** had been made) (De Jong 2001: 512) and given the previously established connection to the divinity Sekhmet through the *hypocephalus* (Mekis 2020: 31) in the preceding chapter, this thesis could argue that the Sekhmet incarnation of the deity may be the more probable intended rather than Bastet.

It is highly likely that the small size of this amulet may be attributed to its primary function as a portion of jewellery which, together with its companion piece (**Fig. 42**), may have been designed that way to prevent an overabundance of bulk to the necklace. The typical constituent elements of the *wedjat* eye symbol can be identified as follows (see **Fig. 43**) for number placement) (Müller-Winkler 1987: 94):

1. Thread loop/"Oesenaufsatz"
2. Eyebrow
3. Upper eyelid field
4. a. Upper lid margin
4. b. Make-up line
5. Eyeball
6. a. Inner corner of the eye
6. b. Outer eyelid
7. Pupil
8. Lower lid margin
9. Vertical extension down
10. Spiral bow/bow line
11. Empty eye field

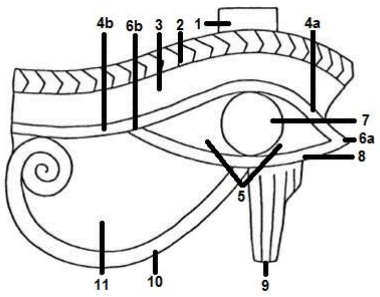

Figure 43: Constituent elements of the 'Horusauge' as identified by Müller-Winkler (1987: 94).

Upon inspection, though the area at the back of the eye (no. 11 – empty eye field) is shown to be typically empty, both ***E.3.2.*** and **Fig. 42** have stylised triangular shapes indicated within the 'empty' field. **Fig. 42** has only one, yet three can be identified in ***E.3.2.***, of which the two on the outer edges are smaller and the one in the centre the largest. An argument could be made that the triangles were meant to symbolise the three great pyramids of Giza, for as Wilkinson (1994: 16) points out, the ancient Egyptians were highly aware of the shapes of objects and the symbolic importance that the dimension of forms could hold. The deliberate cluster of three large triangles in an otherwise usually empty space and the lack of the belief in coincidental reflection on the part of the Egyptians themselves (Wilkinson 1994: 126), makes this a worthy speculation.

4.1.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

Taking into account the information presented in the preceding chapters, this thesis offers the following interpretation as to the amulet's symbolic meaning, the purpose of the *wedjat* eye image and the amulet's final function:

The *wedjat* was a commonly used and an exceedingly popular amulet among the ancient Egyptians. In the shape of a human eye with the markings of a hawk, it was associated with

and represented the power of several divinities. The most popular divine association was with the divinity Horus (Allen 2005: 10). The right facing *wedjat* eye (as is the case with ***E.3.2.***) was seen as the healed eye of Horus and was known as 'the sound one' (Allen 2005: 27). It is therefore a reasonable interpretation to understand the function of the *wedjat* in this amulet to be a representative of Horus.

Yet this thesis would argue the validity of another stance. ***E.3.2.*** was used in conjunction with another *wedjat* eye as part of the same piece of jewellery (Allen 2005: 26-27). As previously suggested, this brings to the front the significance of the use of *two* amulets of the same type, as well as the unifying duality the number signifies (Wilkinson 1994: 129). Since there has been indicated that belief in the coincidental was scarce in the Egyptian mind (Wilkinson 1994: 126), this act must be seen as deliberate on the part of the creator of the jewellery.

Furthermore, it has been indicated that the elements of duality and unity represented by the number two were often expressed through male and female elements (Wilkinson 2005: 129). Sekhmet was also associated strongly with the *wedjat* symbol as "the furious eye of Re" (Mekis 2020: 31). Serving as the protector of the divinity linked to the sun and the heavens – a position also associated with Horus (Andrews 1994: 43) – Sekhmet was exemplified as the outer shape of the eye that guarded the iris, Amon-Re (Mekis 2020: 31). In light of this information, this thesis would argue that the use of these two *wedjat* amulets as a part of the same ornament was likely meant to reflect the power of both Horus and Sekhmet.

The material signification of the amulet is somewhat more intricate. That the amulet (both amulets) had been made of gold suggests not only a divine connection but also implies status (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 37). Gold was a precious, costly substance that was difficult to mine (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 36-37). To be used for jewellery that would likely have been worn both in life and in death (Andrews 1994: 43) would have to indicate at least a degree of, or perhaps add to, the status of its bearer.

Even so, the significance of the divine association with the metal cannot be ignored. Its relationship with the sun and "profound implications for the Afterlife" as well as the belief that gold denoted the "flesh of the gods" (Markowitz & Lacovara 2001b: 34) would have amplified every aspect of these *wedjat* amulets. It is, in truth, the perfect substance for the symbol. The gold would essentially have acted as powerful conduit for the magic believed to have resided in the image of the *wedjat*. This thesis would argue that the gold used to make ***E.3.2.*** and its companion was meant to denote the status of its bearer and more importantly, provide magical protection, regeneration and healing (Allen 2005: 27) for eternity.

As to the speculation about the meaning of the added triangles at the back of the *wedjat* eyes; there is evidence to suggest not only a connection to the pyramids but also to

the primeval mound that arose from the waters of chaos at the dawn of creation (Verner 2001: 87). The same mound symbolised by the shape of the pyramids (Verner 2001: 87). The primeval mound was the seat of Re-Atum, the creator sun divinity (Tobin 2001: 469). The name Atum itself, much like the number two, carried a duel meaning of opposites: "'totality' and 'not to be'" (Tobin 2001: 469). However, the primeval mound was one, not three and may therefore be a more suitable interpretation for the triangle in **Fig. 42**, than ***E.3.2.***; the spirals moving up the sides and curling off of the triangle possibly indicating the waters from which the mound rose.

This does not disconnect the idea of the pyramids or the primeval mound from ***E.3.2.***. Quite to the contrary, as these two amulets were used together, there is an undeniable connection. Beyond the association in shape to the primeval mound, the pyramids were royal tombs and as such represented the power of the pharaohs (Verner 2001: 87). Horus, the falcon deity, was also the divinity of kingship and was often identified with the king (Meltzer 2001: 119). Similarly, Re-Atum was associated with the kingship and the kingdom through his wearing of the combined crown of Upper and Lower Egypt (Tobin 2001: 469). Both deities are therefore related to the sun, the kingship and by extension (as symbols of said leadership and the association of the first mound) the pyramids.

This thesis would therefore argue the following about ***E.3.2.*** in the context of its combined use and material signification: the *wedjat* amulet, facing right, made of gold and bearing three triangles (interpreted here as the great pyramids of Giza), symbolically signifies Egypt as a whole and Horus's protection over the kingdom; while its companion piece, also facing right and made of gold, but with only one triangle (interpreted here as the primeval mound and seat of Re-Atum), signifies Sekhmet – who is the furious eye of Re – and protects the land by guarding the sun divinity – the life giving force of the world – symbolised by the eye and iris of the *wedjat*. Together they represent the protection of the world of the living and the sphere of the gods as well as the complete protection of the individual who bears the amulet.

4.2. The Viewer:

As noted previously[50], perception-experience informs fundamentally the understanding with which people approach their situation and environment as the primary information barer of all images and the meaning with which they imbue the universe itself. Eyes, therefore, have rightly – historically – been attributed significant anatomical importance as the principal organs with which people perceive[51].

[50] Refer to **2.1. The Image**
[51] Refer to **4. Reflecting Representation**

Eye imagery clearly held a special place in the Egyptian society and its association with the sun was so pervasive that the *Book of the Dead* vignettes often depicted the rising sun as being adorned by *wedjat* eyes with wings to either side of it, holding ostrich feather fans (**Fig, 44**) (Taylor 2010: 246). The *wedjat* eye was a significant offering/sacrifice to make in temples (Meltzer 2001: 122) and rubrics frequently mention that drawing *wedjat* eyes on linen, papyrus or skin would be powerful enough to serve as a temporary amulet in case of the absence of a real one (Pinch 2010: 110). With regards to the *wedjat* and the king, Menu (2001: 424) writes:

> By placing himself on a level with the gods, the king presents himself as the guarantor of the fertility of the land and the fecundity of livestock […] the subsistence and protection of his people, who in turn owe him obeisance and work. This "contract" is outlined in the Pyramid Texts […] in paragraphs 1587-1606, Egypt is assimilated with the eye of Horus, which the god has reconstituted with his own hands after Seth's attacks. Then the king addresses the land, in exactly the same terms, passing in recognition of the cause from the mythological realm, where he is Horus incarnate, to the political realm where he exercises his restorative powers.

This clearly indicates that the culturally perceived power and influence of the *wedjat* eye symbol extends well beyond the borders of religion or magic and even into the socio-economic realm. The king is the divine power (Horus) that restores life to the land (the *wedjat* eye) – which in return – grants its regenerating, protective and sustaining gifts to the people, who toil its soil in the name of their king. The *wedjat* was not just for the living or just the dead (Andrews 1994: 43), nor was it cult specific like many other well-known emblems (Bubastis and Apis in Memphis)[52]. It found its way into almost every important aspect of Egyptian life.

Figure 44: Adoration of the rising sun from the *Book of the Dead* of Anhai, ca. 1100 BCE, 20th Dynasty, BM EA10472/1 (Taylor 2010: 246).

It seems nearly impossible to imagine that ancient Egyptians would not have been aware of the general meaning or import of an image so widespread in everyday use. Yet, as an amulet from the "epoch of Hellenistic Egypt" (Hölbl 2001: 76),

[52] Wilkinson (2003: 178) and Thompson (2001: 329-331)

one could question to what extent the additional symbolism of ***E.3.2.*** was understood by its Ptolemaic audience. Since religious politics and the development of religion under the Ptolemies continued in two varying currents for the Greek citizens and the Egyptians (Hölbl 2001: 81), it may not be practical to assume that the Greek inhabitants of the country would have been as well versed in the language of symbols as a 'native speaker' may have been. A similar problem arose with ***E.2.1.*** (the Wepwawet amulet in the previous chapter).

Though the Ptolemies did maintain successful policies within the general margins of Egyptian cults (Hölbl 2001: 82), the specific adaptation of certain religious elements and additions to cultic customs specifically designed for the Greek-Egyptians (Hölbl 2001: 81-82) may have created too many variants in the understanding of symbolic signifiers. As a result of this distinction, it could perhaps have been that a Greek bearer of the amulet might not have been able to understand the added symbolic signification of ***E.3.2.*** to its fullest extent (if at all). However, the opposite is also possible and the said hypothetical Greek individual may have been fully aware of the emblem's significance; either case will remain speculation. It is nevertheless important to ask the question.

As to the Egyptians themselves – they would likely have been versed well enough in the amuletic function of the image and its religious or mythic connotations to be able to read its vested meaning. Even if the hypothesis that this thesis has presented is accepted as the likely symbolic function of the amulet – the implication of Horus, Sekhmet, the pyramids and the primeval mound, symbolising Egypt as a whole and the deities as the extended focus of the amuletic protection alongside that of its bearer – it would be difficult to credibly argue a case in which the Egyptians were incapable of understanding this amulet's primary function. The combination of the predetermined rates of visual literacy in Egypt (discussed in Chapter 3) and the vast array of uses and associations with/of the *wedjat* image supports this view. The image-function relationship of this amulet could not likely have been lost to its Egyptian audience and would have been believed to continue its protection throughout its bearer's existence.

4.3. The Mesopotamian Eye-idols

4.3.1. Amulet Description:

The ‘eye-idol’ amulet presented here contains two figures; the largest stands at the back with the smaller figure in the front of it. The shapes of these figures are more than a little stylised and border on the abstract. Their forms can be made out by examining the outer lines of the amulet. They start with a general half heart-like shape at the top that curves down a little before extending slightly outward and away from the centre of the shape, to the left and right, before finally curving down again and leading out into vertical downward lines before stopping in a straight horizontal line. These shapes and lines form what could essentially be seen as a head (half-heart shape), a neck (downward curve), shoulders (outwards extended lines) and a body (vertical downward lines). The figure in front is a little damaged and therefore less clear than the one in the back, however, both have the same form. Within the half-heart shape appears incised, nut-like shapes with indentations at their centre and ‘m’-shaped lines above them; these likely indicate eyes and eyebrows and are found on both figures. Hence the name given to these amulets: eye-idols. The amulet’s colour is an off grey-brown with lighter areas that appear almost white.

Figure 45: M.3.2. ca. 3700-3500 BCE, Mesopotamian eye-idol.

4.3.2. Cultural Significance:

Figure 46: A group of eye-idols from the foundations of the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, c. 3500-3300 BCE (Collon 1995: 47)

Almost a hundred years since their discovery by Mallowan (1947: 38-39) in the spring of 1937-38, there is still very little that is known about the so-called ‘eye-idols’, from the northern Mesopotamian site of Tell Brak (location of one of the first cities in the area (Vallet & Baldi 2016: 97)), that is beyond the speculative. The ongoing debates as to the function and cultural-religious significance of these artefacts make this a difficult subject to handle. Found in the foundations of the “Eye-Temple”, these plaques usually have no anatomical features

save the eyes, or multiple pairs of eyes (**Fig. 46**) (Collon 1995: 45). Initially it was believed that these idols were a unique feature of Tell Brak culture (van Buren 1950: 140) and that they were temporally centred in origin and use around the end of the fourth- beginning of the third millennium BCE (Mallowan 1947: 32-33). This information went hand-in-hand with the theory that the finds at sites in northern Mesopotamia, like Tell Brak, were primarily due to southern influence and occupation (Lawler 2006: 1458-1459). Emberling and McDonald (2003: 3) wrote:

> There is little doubt that the southern Uruk occupation of Brak represents an arrival of people from the south – forms of architecture, sizes of mud bricks, style of ceramics, and extensive use of classic Uruk cylinder seals and complex tokens suggest that both domestic settlement and larger systems of administration were altered.[53]

However, recent excavations at Tepe Gawra (Bielińska 2016: 36) and Tell Hamoukar have also yielded similar finds of eye-idol deposits (though fewer in number) (Reichel 2009: 81) and the 1990's excavations lead to the dating, of both the Eye Temple site and the eye idols found at Tell Brak, being pushed back by five centuries to the middle of the fourth millennium BCE[54], before southern occupation (Lawler 2006: 1459). The distance between Tell Hamoukar and Tell Brak is merely 50km and since each site is located near water courses and well-known trade routes, it is very likely that contact between the two places was well established (Gibson et al. 2002b: 56-57). If so, and considering the findings of both sites, it would not be out of place to suggest shared religious ideas and/or cults.

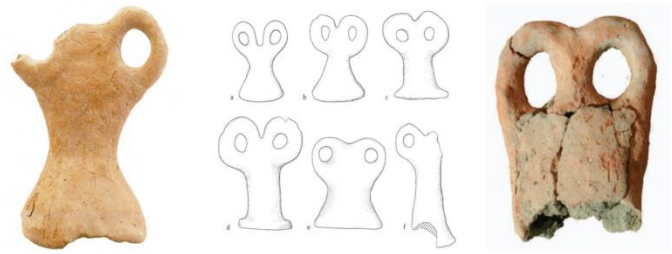

Figure 47: (From left to right) Spectacle-idol from Tell Abu Hafur (Bielińska 2016: 34), -idols from north-eastern Syria and Tepe Gawra (2016: 35) and an –idol from Tell Feres, level 7 (III) (Vallet & Baldi 2016: 95)

When the eye-idols (and their familiars, the spectacle-idols, see **Fig. 47**) were first discovered in their thousands, it was deduced that their function was mainly as a type of eye-symbol with amuletic properties – "their superabundance […] [refuting] the […] argument that the multiplicity of an object precludes its ritual or religious use" (van Buren 1950: 140-141). For the main part, the initial assumption of the objects' non-secular properties was aligned with the concept of a singular Eye-Deity that was somehow abstractly represented

[53] See also Frangipane (2001: 317-318).
[54] See also Oates & Oates (1993: 176)

(van Buren 1955: 164) and in prehistoric times, universal (Dhavalikar 1965: 538). The pre-emptive inspiration for this interpretation of the concept was the "Mother-goddess" (van Buren 1955: 167), who was soon identified in conjunction with the "Eye-God" in Riemschneider's (1953) treatment of the subject. He is defined as the great divinity of the nomadic peoples, who were used to wandering the deserts and could see through to the horizon, whose cult was "universal" and "everywhere supreme" exempting those areas where the Mother-goddess was predominant (Riemschneider 1953: 22). It is believed that these 'idols' may have developed into one or more of several divinities closely related to eyes in later Mesopotamian traditions and other areas. These include the Elamite Twin-god, Enki (Ea), Ištar (Innin-Inanna) (van Buren 1955: 168-175) and the eye-goddesses of India (Dhavalikar 1965: 538).

Figure 48: Eye-idol with incised stag (Mallowan 1965: Fig. 1)

Since then many other explanations have attempted to subvert this prevailing theory, to no avail. Breniquet (1996: 31-53)[55] rejected the interpretation of a religious connotation and argued that the spectacle-idols had a purely utilitarian function. However, this notion was dismissed in turn by Bielińska (2016: 38-39) who argued that Brenique's interpretation did not address (1) the absence of a revolutionary change to explain why these artefacts functioned during the Uruk period, but not thereafter; (2) questions that continue to arise as to the spectacle-idols' functional interpretation that continuously fails to find a singular and complete supporting motif for all contexts; or (3) the strong possibility of a shared religious function between the spectacle-idols and the eye-idols and the implied commonalities of use that entails.

Figure 49: (From left to right) Eye-idol (a), c. 3700-3500 BCE (MMA: 324152) and Eye-idol (b), c. 3700-3500 BCE (MMA: 324154).

Since the eye-idols and the spectacle-idols are believed to be of the same type of artefact, they are continuously studied in conjunction with one another[56]. Much like some of the previous amulets in this thesis, it is believed that these artefacts were ritually discarded as votive offerings, since they seem to share one or more aspects usually attributed to such objects, best defined by Osborne (2004: 4) as: "religious imagery, precious or exotic material, distinctive architectural context[s] and [a] concentration of non-functional items". However, even though these two artefacts appear similar, the spectacle-idol is of a cruder design and they are structurally

[55] As quoted by Bielińska (2016: 36-37).
[56] Yaylali (2014) as referenced by Cooper (2016: 31).

quite different[57]. Therefore it cannot be ruled out that they may have been objects of separate use and affiliation, however unlikely that may seem at this point.

Whichever the case may be, the theory that the eye-idols may have acted as early representatives of the divinity Inanna appears to have the most support. This is derived mostly from comparisons made between the Eye-Temple strata and those of contemporary temples in southern Mesopotamia which were decorated with imagery that was later closely associated with the deity (Emberling 2002: 85). From the mid to late third millennium onward religious focus shifted to the deity Belet-Nagar for whom a separate temple may have been built (Emberling 2002: 84). Though the site of the temple is yet to be located it is believed to have been built near or around the Mitannian Palace (Emberling 2002: 84). This change of religious direction may perhaps have gone hand-in-hand with the decline of the Eye-Temple. In the end, however, there is no definitive evidence to associate the idols with any specific deity.

4.3.3. Material Symbolism:

The eye-idols, perhaps as a general rule of thumb are very simplistic in design. They consist mainly of an oblong body, thick, but small necks and half-heart shapes for heads on which the eyes are indicated. The eyes and single eyebrow at the top of the idols are incised (Collon 1995: 45) and filled in with paint (van Buren 1955: 165) (**Fig 46**). This technique was likely used to highlight the eyes and the hypnotic impact of the anatomy (Watson 2011: 91-92). The plaque is usually small and thin with the majority being less than 1cm thick (Yaylali 2014: 3-4)[58]. Unable to stand on their own it is believed that they were meant to be laid down on their 'backs'. Some of the plaques have only one pair of eyes, others multiple or "whole families of eyes" (Collon 1995: 45) (ref. **Fig. 46 & 49**). Some have added markings to the 'body' of the object (**Fig. 46, 48 & 49**) or elaborate head gear that could be crowns (Dhavalikar 1965: 538). Usually made of gypsum alabaster or bone[59] others have been known to be made from steatite, shale, or terra-cotta (van Buren 1950: 141), and even shell or mother-of-pearl (Bielińska 2016: 36).

Since archaeological evidence has shown that artists of this time would have had the artistic capabilities to produce quite accurate/detailed representations of the human figure and features, it must therefore be concluded that the eye-idols are deliberately plain in composition (Watson 2011: 90-92). It has been argued that, while the incised eyes were meant to designate the divinity, the added adornments of the artefacts were meant to

[57] Yaylali (2014) as referenced by Cooper (2016: 34).
[58] As referenced by Cooper (2016: 44).
[59] Matney (1986: 6-8) as referenced by Cooper (2016: 29).

indicate to the divinity who had dedicated the amulet, what prayer was being invoked or what the offering meant (Emberling 2002: 84-86). However, as one such an artefact (**Fig. 48**) has a stylised rendering of a goat or stag with a bird-like marking over it on its body, which is believed to indicate its association with an early representation of the deity Ninhursag (Mallowan 1947: 34), the aforementioned theory may not strictly be justified. Similarly, though it has been argued that eye-idols with more than one pair of eyes and indications of multiple bodies may have been meant to symbolise mothers with children, spouses or even siblings (van Buren 1950: 141), as there is no indication of gender or age (e.g. through body shape) there is no conclusive evidence to support this.

With specific reference to ***M.3.2.***, it is perhaps more tempting than it should be to read age or gender into the material signification of the amulet, through the placement and stature of the bodies, the position of the two pairs of eyes in relation to one another. One could argue that, since the bodies stand one before the other, the one at the back larger than the one at the front and seemingly encompassing the smaller figure, this amulet was meant to represent the "Eye-god" and "Mother-goddess" together – perhaps even conjoined as one. This would be further supported by Riemschneider's theory that the cult of the "Eye-god" was universal in earlier times, with the cult of the "Mother-goddess" being prevalent only in specific regions (1953: 22). Thus in representing the one figure as larger, its eyes placed above that of the other which it surrounds, could be seen as an indication of their cultic significance and relation to one another. One could even argue that figures such as the two-headed/four-eyed idol in **Fig. 49** represent the two divinities together as consorts (van Buren 1955: 169), standing as equals. However, as with the previously mentioned theories, for lack of any conclusive evidence, these two arguments cannot be anything more than hypothetical.

There is very little to be said for the size of the amulet. Being of the same average size as the other idols of its type, with the same plain composition and flat underside, it is most probable that these characteristics have mainly to do with the practical function of the artefact rather than emblematic signification. The theory that they were placed in the desired place of ritual practice while lying flat is supported in that there appears to be no thread-loop from which the objects could be hung and, as mentioned earlier, they were incapable of standing upright on their own. Additionally, as with the other idols, ***M.3.2.*** the use of gypsum alabaster as the material used to create this votive amulet, as indicated by the plethora of similarly made items, was likely a result of making use of available materials rather than symbolic importance.

An argument could be made that the light colouring of the artefact may have associated significance, but there does not *seem* to be any evidence that light colouring would have had any specific value in these cases beyond being a result of the designated

material. Finally, though no remains of pigment are visible on the grooves of the eyes in ***M.3.2.***, the presence of coloured paints on other eye-idols as a means of highlighting the presence of the eyes and the anatomical preference shown by the lack of other features, suggest in no uncertain terms that the function of these amulets are linked to the idea of watchfulness. As previously mentioned, the dominant theory in this regard is that the eyes signify divinity and the deity's watchful protection over the people and their lives[60]. There is little reason to doubt this perspective.

4.3.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

In the context of the available information presented in the discussions above, this thesis presents the following interpretation of the amulet's symbolic meaning, the purpose of the eye-idol image and the amulet's final function:

The eye-idols, though popular in use in the areas of Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra and Tell Hamoukar, have not been found in nearly as many regions as their familiar companions, the spectacle-idols. The latter, not nearly as many in number as the eye-idols, have been found in: Hama, Sheikh Hassan, Arslantepe, Hacinebi, Tell Brak, Tell Feres al-Sharqi, Tell Hamoukar, Tepe Gawra, Qalinj Agha, Khafaje, Ur, Uruk, Susa, Chogha Mish (Bielińska 2016: 35). This seems to indicate that the eye-idols appear to be an occurrence that is somewhat unique to the northern part of Mesopotamia, but not unique in their existence. Despite their differences in composition with the spectacle-idols, they share enough traits that scholars feel confident in identifying the two artefacts as part of the same type (Bielińska 2016: 38). Although the religious function of the spectacle-idols have previously been called into question in favour of more practical purposes (Breniquet 1996: 31-53)[61], the "magical and apotropaic" function of the eye-idols are hardly disputed at all (Bielińska 2016: 38-39).

The temple in which they were found, the Tell Brak Eye-Temple, appeared to have been the dominant place of religious devotion until at least the middle of the third millennium BCE (Emberling 2002: 84). Dedicated to some form of protector/guardian deity connected with the eye, it is believed that the deity in question was meant to be invoked in order to continuously watch over the people, much like the universal Eye-god and/or Mother-goddess[62]. There has also been noted that the association of an eye divinity through the temple (in which the idols were found in the thousands) as well as the incised eyes on the objects themselves, indicates that the eyes must represent the deity in itself (Emberling 2002: 84-86). As such it

[60] Emberling (2002: 84-86); Bielińska (2016: 39) and Dhavalikar (1965: 538).
[61] As referenced by Bielińska (2016: 37).
[62] Riemschneider (1953: 22) and Emberling (2002: 84-86).

has been inferred that the added adornments of other idols serve to indicate the individual who dedicated the amulet (Emberling 2002: 84-86).

Yet ***M.3.2.*** has no additional adornments. In light of this another interpretation has been offered in which the two figures represented in the shape of the amulet were meant to indicate a conjoining of the Eye-god and the Mother-goddess. The Eye-god as the larger figure at the back encompasses the Mother-goddess, represented by the smaller figure at the front. In support of this it has been argued that the idols with two figures standing next to each other (**Fig. 49**) could be seen as the two divinities represented as equals and consorts, inspired by the notion that later incarnations of the Eye-god as the "Nin-gods" (Nin-urta, Nin-gizzida and Nin-igi-ku) could have developed from the consort of the Mother-goddess (van Buren 1955: 169). However this theory does not yet account for the other idol forms.

The single eye-idol with only one pair of eyes could be accounted for in the idea that they would represent only a single deity, either the Eye-god or the Mother-goddess; more likely the latter as there are those who have made arguments in favour of connections between the Eye-Temple and the decorations of later temples that were associated with Inanna/Ištar (van Buren 1955: 75). The idols with the head-dresses then could also be seen as representing the divinity(s) whose presence is perhaps more definitively indicated by the very presence of the 'cap' – especially considering that by the early third millennium the adornments had already developed as distinct symbols meant to signify the deities in the form of the horned cap (Black & Green 1992: 102). The only largely unaccounted for group would now be the ones with more than two pairs of eyes. A suggestion has been made toward a theophany or complete divine family (van Buren 1950: 142), but in truth the interpretation of the idols as wholly representing the divinities themselves is somewhat less widespread than the alternative.

Since some scholars prefer the view that these amulets had not been intended to represent the divinities but rather those who offered to them at the temple at Tell Brak, proposals have been made in support of this stance. The earliest interpretation to be suggested was that the idols were representative of the people and that the idols with multiple sets of eyes were meant to represent entire families (Dhavalikar 1965: 538). Further support was garnered for this – as mentioned above – from the personalised ornaments that were added to some of the idols (Emberling 2002: 84-86). Others have remarked on the similarities between the emphasised eyes of the eye-idols and the wide-set eyes of the statuettes from the Sumerian temple at Ešnunna or "Square-Temple" that represent worshippers rather than the deities (Black & Green 1992: 80). The argument in favour of this theory offers similarly compelling support.

Therefore this thesis offers the following hypothesis as to the use and signification of ***M.3.2.***: the eye-idol found amongst the dedications at the Tell Brak Eye-Temple was made to

indicate both the people who dedicated the amulet as well as the divinity to which it was dedicated. The eyes may have represented the deity but the figures were representative of the people over whom the divine entity was meant watch and guard. The amulet does not appear to be convincingly symbolic of either one over the other and could therefore possibly be attributed to both.

4.4. The Viewer:

The intriguing and vexing nature of the study of these eye-idols is summarised best in the words of Dhavalikar (1965: 539): “in the non-existence of any concrete evidence, whatever we say about their use is bound to be nothing if not hypothetical”. Despite this, the possibilities which remain open to investigation offer a bounty to be plucked at. Eyes were an important and recurring motif in ancient Mesopotamia from the prehistoric to the Neo-Assyrian period and it is sometimes difficult to discern when it had a religious-magical or merely decorative function (Black & Green 1992: 79-80). In the case of eye-shaped amulets, however, religious overtones were almost a certainty (Black & Green 1992: 80). Regardless of what one may then argue as to the final function of the eye-idols, that they had amuletic or religious-magical properties is hardly a question that needs answering any longer.

What requires further attention is our understanding of the diffusion of these amulets within northern Mesopotamian societies and their appropriate cultural and religious contexts, neither of which can really be achieved without further archaeological evidence. Similarly, the question as to the extent of the general awareness of the symbolic signification of these artefacts cannot possibly be answered here in full, since there is still so little forthcoming information. The best possible way to approach this subject would be to treat the cache from Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra and Tell Hamoukar as isolated instances until such a time as further evidence arises to the contrary. It must also be considered at least in part along with what is known about its companion models – the spectacle-idols.

First consider the amount of eye-idols found at north- north-western areas of Mesopotamia in relation to the spectacle-idol finds. The concentration of these amulets is in the thousands at Tell Brak alone, believed by their excavator Mallowan (1947: 44) to have been dedicated by/representative of the entire populace of the city. Yet, as previously mentioned, the yields of eye-idols are limited to these areas. In contrast, spectacle-idols are far fewer in number but are spread out over a larger area, both to the north and the south of Mesopotamia (Bielińska 2016: 36). Since the spectacle-idols cannot be linked to the south and Uruk expansion to the north, despite the examples from the south mainly occurring

during the late Uruk period, it has been argued that north- north-western Mesopotamia may have been their place of origin[63].

If so, and taking into account the connection between the spectacle-idols and the eye-idols as well as the fact that eye-idols have thus far only come to light in the north, the archaeological record may well support this theory. Furthermore, since the eye-idols predate the Uruk expansion northward[64] and both types date solely to this period ceasing to be used again after the end of the Uruk period[65], it may even be argued that the religious practices to which these artefacts belong may have spread from the north to the south before the expansion and continued until the end of the Urukean civilisation. However, such statements cannot be made without reservation as too little is as of yet known about these idols and Uruk-related sites in the Tigris valley and further to the east "have been far less extensively investigated than those regions lying further west" (Bielińska 2016: 36).

Since the majority of the spectacle-idols have been found in either a domestic or funerary context, it has been speculated that they may represent domestic cults (Bielińska 2016: 39). In support of this it has been pointed out that the diversity of the shape and materials from which these idols are made would serve to "reflect the cult range of local variants" in the form of "a symbol of a guardian deity charged with [the] protection of the household" (Bielińska 2016: 39). As the eye-idols have been found largely in the contexts of temple related finds (since the majority still come from the Tell Brak Eye-Temple (Emberling 2002: 82) it may be suggested that they in turn are connected to broader communal rituals rather than the private sphere – at least within the north.

In later Mesopotamian cultures, such as was the case with the Assyrians, visual literacy – the awareness of the symbolic signification of images – *appears* to have been fairly wide-spread, or at the least relatively well transmitted, depending on the art[66]. The same could only be said with equally hesitant certainty about the earlier cultures. Mostly as our own knowledge of ancient people's ability to comprehend the symbolic signification of art rests on context based interpretations and, where possible, textual verification through ancient scripts that have remained. In the case of ***M.3.2.*** the latter is not possible as it predates the use of writing in Mesopotamia[67].

Considering, then, the contextual evidence discussed above with reference to the dispersion of the amulets and the socio-religious implication of the concentrated use of the eye-idols in the north, it would seem unlikely that the people who lived in Tell Brak, Tepe

[63] Forest *et al.* (2012: 37); Gibson *et al*. (2002a: 20, **Fig. 14**); Quntar *et al*. (2011: **Fig. 3**) and Stein *et al*. (1997: 120, **Fig. 4/A**, **C**, **D**, **E**; **12**) as referenced by Bielińska (2016: 36).
[64] Oates & Oates (1993: 176) and Lawler (2006: 1459).
[65] Bielińska (2016: 36) and Emberling (2002: 84).
[66] Refer to **3.6. The Viewer**
[67] Lawler (2006: 1459) and Woods (2010a: 15).

Gawra and Tell Hamoukar would have been unaware of the intrinsic meaning of the amulets. The dissemination of the spectacle-idols are a strong indicator that the reach of the religious practices to which the idols are attributed (if indeed eye-idols and spectacle-idols form a part of the same religious practices) may well have been spread across Mesopotamia and perhaps even some of the surrounding areas. However the limited geographical occurrence of the eye-idols may be suggestive of a feature unique to the northern regions which may, as a result, not have been understood by those living beyond those cities despite shared religious cults and rituals.

This thesis would therefore propose (in light of the lack of evidence in totality) that the conscious awareness of the invested symbolic imagery of the eye-idols would have been known to the ancient people living in Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra and Tell Hamoukar, but may perhaps have been less apparent to anyone living outside of these areas.

4.5. Deductions:

"When the roots of the eye symbol are investigated, it is observed that the first instances are found in Old Mesopotamian and Egyptian art" (Koç & Temür 2014: 13). The *wedjat eye* and eye-idol images from Egypt and Mesopotamia are potent examples of the prevalence of eye icons in the ancient world. In this fourth chapter emphasis has been placed on these two-dimensional images to ascertain the level of awareness that has been invested in the use of the eye symbols in relation to amuletic magic. Despite not being in the round as the amulets in the previous chapter, the anatomical importance of the eyes are clearly indicated through its shape and features – in the instance of the eye-idol, without the need for much detail. In light of the discussions throughout this chapter, the following inferences have been made regarding the eye images, their function, meaning and influence with regards to the use of amulets in their respective cultural environments:

The *wedjat* eye amulet from Egypt can, through various symbolic associations, be connected to multiple deities that include; Horus, Bastet, Sekhmet, Amon-Re and Re-Atum. This thesis has argued the merits of interpreting the symbolic association of ***E.3.2.*** and its companion piece with Horus and Sekhmet (and by extension an embodiment of Re). A view that is based in the interpretation of the symbolism of (1) the duality that rests in the combined use of two amulets, (2) the direction of the eyes, (3) the added adornments found on the amulets and (4) the associated connotation and role of the various divinities that are often connected to the symbol and the prevalence with which each was viewed in context. Likewise, this thesis has proposed that the additional imagery found in the 'open eye field' of both ***E.3.2.*** and **Fig. 42** were meant to indicate the three great pyramids of Giza and the Primeval mound, respectively, based on the contextual association of the specified divinities.

The purpose of the amulet was to grant protection to its bearer in totality by reflecting the protective and regenerative power of Horus through the representation of the eye with the associated hawk markings that denoted the particular deity. Thus the implication for action imbedded in the function of ***E.3.2.*** is the unstipulated and complete prevention of harm through the aid of the divinity that has been represented through symbolic reflection. The comprehension of these visual indicators, which is under no doubt, shows a deliberate use of images and therefore conscious investment in the image-function relationship of the amulet.

The eye-idol from Mesopotamia is somewhat less specific. With no direct indicators one way or another, their primary function has been attributed to the presence of a cult of an unidentified Eye-Deity. To this stance scholars have argued the existence of the all-seeing divinity whose role was to watch over and protect their worshippers. This association stems mainly from the heavy emphasis placed on the eyes and the lack of any noticeable indicators or separate features that may reveal different entities or multiple connotations with the divine. Since some variations may indicate more than one presence the argument has been made that such amulets were representative of the families who dedicated the amulets to the deity. It has therefore been argued by this thesis in favour of the pre-proposed theory that the eyes may have represented the Eye-Deity while the figure represented the people who worshipped the divinity.

Similarly to the *wedjat* eye amulet the purpose of the eye-idols appear to have been aimed at an unspecified yet complete protection of its dedicator through the watchful gaze of the divinity. The implication for action imbedded in the function of ***M.3.2.***, as the one before, is overall protection reflected through the incised eyes at the top of the amulet that are representative of the Eye-Deity. Despite how little is known about these idols the concentrated use of them in the northern regions of Mesopotamia make it highly unlikely that their symbolic significance had not been understood, indicating a conscious relationship between the image and the function of the amulet.

As a result both of the eye-related amulets above may be viewed as relevant examples of the presupposed phenomenon.

5. Adding Voice to Image

> Cognitively as well as sociologically, writing underpins
> 'civilisation', the culture of cities.
> (Goody 1987: 300)

The previous chapters of this thesis have focused on the conscious use of images as part of the case studies, in order to understand the image-function relationship of amulets. Many of these icons have been part of the development of human communication, instrumental and hegemonic[68] interaction with the environment, and culture since prehistoric times – garnering awareness and meaning deep within the human mind. However, images are not the only form of communication that impacted the human experience.

The advent of writing brought many changes to the way people lived. While the spoken word was believed in some cultures to have significant value (Doxey 2001: 398), it was "temporally fleeting and spatially anchored" (Woods 2010a: 15). The sharing of ideas through writing, on the other hand, can be transmitted across time and space. Thus, "[the] ability to represent language graphically, to make language visible, stands as one of humanity's greatest intellectual and cultural achievements" (Woods 2010a: 15). The very backbone of large complex bureaucratic societies (Michalowski 1994: 56), it offers the opportunity to combine words with icons, add voice to image.

The earliest writing systems found in the world were created in Mesopotamia and Egypt, by the end of the fourth millennium BCE, in China, by the end of the second millennium BCE and in Mesoamerica, by the middle of the first millennium BCE (Woods 2010a: 15). Writing was very likely created due to the need that arose in more densely populated areas to keep track of all the economic and eventually political happenings (Woods 2010b: 33-34). Yet

Figure 50: (From left to right) Inscribed cuneiform artefact from Mesopotamia, made of alabaster, Middle Assyrian period (BM: 91059); Amuletic stela inscribed with hieroglyphs, Egypt, 26th Dynasty (BM: EA 35403).

[68] Refer to **2.3. The Theory**

both Egyptian and Mesopotamian tradition hold that writing was conceived in order for mankind/people to improve their memory; although they take varying stances on how positive the consequences were[69]. As significant as this creation was in its influence on everyday life, it was even more consequential within the context of magic.

5.1. The Inscribed Heart Amulets of Egypt

5.1.1. Amulet Description:

This dark amulet is made entirely of jasper and is in the shape of a stylised jar/pot with handles, one on each side, and a lid, rather than as an actual heart. The jar shape of the heart amulet is oval with a sharply rounded bottom and the rim of the lid is clearly defined. On the top of the lid a suspension loop has been made where the handle of the lid ought to be so that the amulet may hang from a cord as part of a bracelet or pendant. The suspension loop has two grooves running across it from front to back on the outer edges of it. The amulet is covered on both sides with an engraved hieroglyphic inscription, of which the one side's inscription has been inlaid with paint. This inscription is from chapter 30b of the '*Book of the Dead*'. The surface of the amulet is well preserved.

Figure 51: E.4.3. ca. 1350-1250 BCE, Inscribed heart amulet in the round.

5.1.2. Cultural Significance:

Much like the *wedjat/Udjat* amulets, the heart/*ib* amulets were among the most popular amulets in ancient Egypt (De Sousa 2007a: 713). To the ancient Egyptians, who were aware of the heart's importance to the circulatory system, the heart rather than the brain was the seat of the human conscience and consciousness (Allen 2005: 42), the place in which resided a person's identity and memory (De Sousa 2007a: 719). As such, the funerary heart amulet was intended to ensure the preservation of the individual's intellectual and emotional faculties in perpetuity (Allen 2005: 42). De Sousa (2007b: 70) writes:

> However distinct they might be, [the] different semantic contexts of the use of the heart amulet should not let us lose sight of the fact that they all share some common features. In all of them the heart is depicted as the

[69] Woods (2010b: 34-35) and MacArthur (2010: 115).

> seat of the mind and illustrates the responsibility of each man to keep the *maetic* order in motion. In fact, the innermost meaning of the heart amulet lies on its ability to symbolise the pure heart as an embodiment of the *maetic* order. As such, "illumination", wisdom, purity and renewal are all aspects of the heart filled by *maet.*

The *ib* was therefore meant to be a symbolic, personal personification of *ma'at*. *Ma'at* was the Egyptian concept of justice, "truth", "order" and "cosmic balance" and was personified by the female deity *Mȝ't* (Teeter 2001: 319). It was a "complex, intertwined, and interdependent sense of ethics that tied personal behaviour – such as speaking truthfully, dealing fairly in the market place and especially sustaining obedience to parents, the king, and his agents – to the maintenance of universal order" (Teeter 2001: 319). The connection between the heart and ma'at can also be seen in the 'weighing of the heart ceremony' where – it was believed – the heart of the deceased would be weighed against a feather of ma'at on a set of scales (Lesko 2001a: 195). Should the scales balance, the heart would have proven the deceased to be of a righteous and worthy nature and they would be allowed to continue on in the Afterlife with Osiris (Lesko 2001a: 195). If the scales did not balance, the deceased was believed guilty of not having lived a life governed by the concept of ma'at and they are devoured by Ammamet[70]. However, it was also believed that the heart could be magically influenced so that it did not testify against its owner (Müller-Winkler 1987: 212).

Figure 52: Heart amulet with crescent and egg-shaped markings, New Kingdom c. 1550-1069 BCE, *BM*: EA24740 (Taylor 2010: 174, Fig. 79).

Figure 53: Inscribed heart amulet with illustrated benu-bird, ca. 1070-1032 BCE, Third Intermediate period (MMA: 22.2.24).

The earliest instances of the heart amulet usually date back to the Middle Kingdom (De Sousa 2007a: 719) and by the time of the New Kingdom, it was one of the most important elements of the mummy's paraphernalia (Taylor 2010: 229). From the 11th to the 18th Dynasties, the heart amulet was often associated with royalty and divine status, but by the 21st Dynasty the symbol had become an important item of magical protection within the priesthood of Amun and the Late Period saw it become a "mandatory attribute of the deceased" (De Sousa 2007b: 61). Often decorated with various themes including human heads, scarabs, spells from *the Book of Going Forth by Day* (the *Book of the Dead*) or even *benu*-birds (**Fig. 52** & **53**) (Taylor 2010: 229), the *ib* was also connected

[70] See Lesko (2001a: 195) and Quirke (2001: 213).

to various other deities. Through the addition of the *benu*-bird ((*bnw*) also known as the grey heron, or in the classical world, the phoenix) illustration, the *ib* became associated with Atum, Re and Osiris as a solar symbol (Houlihan 2001a: 191). However, the heart amulet was also related to Thoth.

As another deity closely associated with the concept of ma'at, Thoth was the divinity who presided over the proceedings of the weighing of the heart ceremony (**Fig. 54**) (Doxey 2001: 298). He was also closely linked with several other concepts including "nature, cosmology, science, medicine, [ ] the afterlife […], scribes and writing […]," and was seen as the personification "of divine speech" (Doxey 2001: 398). In the Greek tradition Thoth was even credited with the invention of writing, claiming to have found a new and better method for the Egyptians to improve their memories and gain wisdom (Plato, *Phaedrus* 274c-275b (trans. MacArthur 2010: 115)).

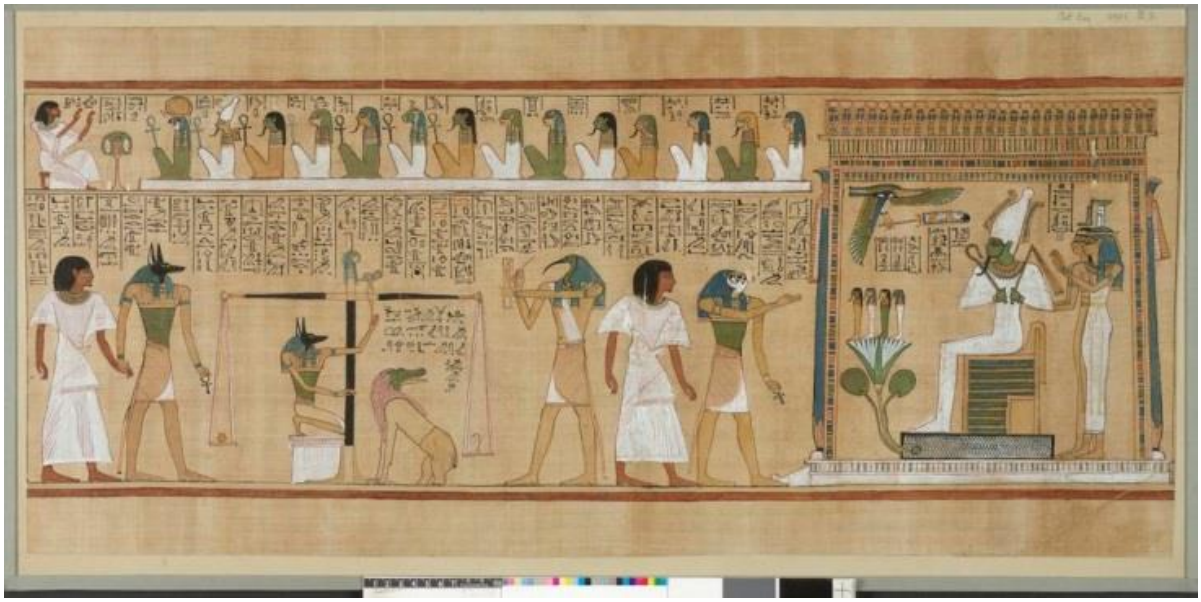

Figure 54: Weighing of the heart ceremony, illustrated on papyrus, 19th Dynasty (BM: EA 9901.3).

The connection between writing, knowledge and magic had always been an established norm in ancient Egyptian religion (Teeter 2011: 164). Both spoken and written words were believed to hold power (Ritner 1993: 35). As a result, Thoth, the god of writing was often viewed as "excellent of magic" in his capacity as "Lord of hieroglyphs" (Ritner 1993: 35). Likewise, "*ḥkꜣ* may be directly identified with the spoken word [and spells] are specifically labelled as "god's words", *mdw-nṯr*" /*medu netcher*[71]. Resultantly, there were often claims made about divine texts that contained the secrets of the gods, and/or had been written by Thoth, that were used by non-Egyptians to heighten the mystique surrounding the Egyptian's relation to magic (Pinch 2010: 61). Remnants of this idea can still be seen today in the use

[71] See Ritner (1993: 35) and Wilkinson (1994: 149).

of the word hieroglyphs, from the Greek "*Hieroglyphika grammata*" meaning "sacred sculptured letters" (Goldwasser 2001: 198).

The link between magic, art and writing (especially hieroglyphic writing) was absolutely prevalent in the ancient Egyptian culture. Egyptians used the same word to refer to their hieroglyphic writing that they did to refer to the drawing of their artworks (Wilkinson 1994: 151). "[The] ancient Egyptian belief in the magical potency of images and inscriptions suggests that just by [writing something] was magically making it true" regardless of the veracity of what was written (Stiebing 2009: 179). A word that was written down had the ability to bring into being that which it recorded and what was written lasted for eternity (Teeter 2010: 156). Thus provisions could be made in perpetuity for the deceased by writing it on tomb walls or enemies could be eternally eradicated by removing their written names (Teeter 2010: 156). By inscribing heart amulets with hieroglyphic texts it would ensure the protection of the heart and consciousness – and by extension the person – for all time.

In the 18th Dynasty the *ib* was also a gift given to the deceased by Osiris as a symbol of the triumph of purity and wisdom over death and corruption (De Sousa 2007b: 70). More so, by the Late Period, "[the] widespread use of the amulet, even by the lower layers of Egyptian population, seems to be explained by the increase of its apotropaic power which was based on the power of purity to control darkness and evil and to guarantee good health both in earthly life and in the beyond" (De Sousa 2007b: 70).

5.1.3. Material Symbolism:

E.4.3. is a heart/*ib* amulet sculpted in the round, its small size clearly stemming from its practical use. The amulet had been carved from jasper which was a common material for amulets in ancient Egypt of which the red jasper was used most often (Shaw 2001: 11). According to Chapter 156 of the *Book of the Dead*, *ḥnmt* (red or yellow jasper) was recommended for use in the "girdle of Isis" amulet while Chapter 30 suggests *nehemef* (green jasper) as the best material for heart scarabs (Shaw 2001: 11). The majority of Egyptian heart amulets consist of various types of stones, from the precious lapis lazuli to simple breccia, with only up to 10% consisting of other materials, e.g. glass (**Fig. 55**)[72]. However, the use of such stones cannot truly be attributed to a simple matter of easy access as the Egyptians often utilised materials that were scarce, difficult to obtain and extremely hard (Wilkinson 1994: 88). Jasper, therefore, would have had significant value as a precious material.

[72] See Müller-Winkler (1987: 212) and Wilkinson (1994: 86-88).

Figure 55: (From left to right) Heart amulet made of red glass, Late Period c. 664-305 BCE, BM EA8088 (Taylor 2010: 174, Fig. 81); Heart amulet made from breccia, Late Period c. 664-305 BCE, BM EA24393 (Taylor 2010: 174, Fig. 80); Heart amulet of lapis lazuli, 26th-30th Dynasty, c. 664-334 BCE (MMA: 74.51.4445).

The lower part of the amulet took the shape of the heart (likely animal) and geometric patterns as well as "stumps"/hands were used to indicate cardiac muscles, the auricle and ventricle[73] (See **Fig. 56**). Topped with a lid (and with the added handles) it configures the heart to represent a vase-like object. To this point De Sousa (2007a: 119-120) writes:

> The iconography of these objects strengthens the idea that the human conscience is an empty vase that only becomes fully functional when transformed by the action of god's power. […] By alluding to the shape of temples, heart amulets also showcased that the heart was the temple where each man meets god […] the heart was the centre of divine light, the *naos* where the solar god manifested itself in each human being.

Figure 56: Heart Amulet with geometric designs made of green stone, Dynasty 19-20, ca. 1200-1100 BCE (Allen 2005: 41).

The symbolic function of the heart amulet design was therefore to represent a vessel of consciousness within which a connection with the Re divinity could be manifested. The constituent elements of the design, as represented in **Fig. 57**, can be understood as follows (adapted from Müller-Winkler 1987: 212):

1. Thread loop
2. Heart/vessel lid

[73] See Müller-Winkler (1987: 212) and De Sousa (2007a: 118).

3. Arterial insertion
4. Valve level
5. Heart body
6. Auricles
7. Decoration/pattern/coronary arteries
8. Heart point

Furthermore, the heart amulet is itself a three dimensional rendering of the *ib*  hieroglyph, with the bull's-heart-shape as the metaphorical home of the mind (De Sousa 2007b: 70). In fact, hieroglyphs seem to appear in the majority of Egyptian artwork, either on the primary level of depiction with overt signification or the more subtle secondary level of depiction (Wilkinson 1994: 151). An example of the primary level of depiction can be seen in the well-known statue of Ramses II (**Fig. 58**) (Wilkinson 1994: 152):

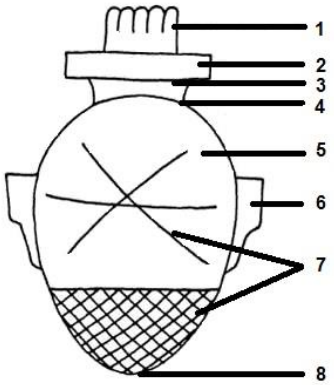

Figure 57: Constituent elements of the heart amulet (Müller-Winkler 1987: 212).

> […] the king is shown as a young child sitting with a finger in his mouth in the pose which is shown in the hieroglyph for mes or child. On his head the king wears a sun (re) disk, and with his left hand he holds a stylised su plant. Thus the statue not only physically represents the king, but also spells out his personal name – *Ra-mes-su.*

Figure 58: Ramses II as a child, ca. 1279-1213 BCE, 19th Dynasty, New Kingdom (EMC: JE 46735).

Thus the signification on this level consists mainly of elements that show hieroglyphs almost exactly as they are used in texts (Wilkinson 1994: 151). The secondary level tends more toward hinting than blatant expression in which indicators such as movement may be used to render words or syntactical meaning (Wilkinson 152). As the heart amulet is a physical representation in the round of the *ib* glyph, thereby existing as a three dimensional word with the same meaning and function, it clearly falls into the former category. Since ***E.4.3.*** does not have the geometric patterns etched into its surface to indicate the cardiac elements as seen in **Fig. 56** & **57**, but rather bears spell 30B from the *Book of the Dead* in hieroglyphs on both

sides, it is essentially in form a double layered hieroglyphic emblem. A word on word and image on image artefact that doubles down on the magic invested in it.

The previously mentioned spell is one that was often used on heart amulets and heart scarabs in order to prevent the heart from testifying against its owner (Taylor 2010: 44). The hieroglyphs for this spell can be seen in **Fig. 59** accompanied below by a transliteration, translation and idiomatic translation[74]:

Figure 59: Hieroglyphs of spell 30B from the Book of the Dead (Sagrillo 2011: 242)

Transliteration:

[1] jb‹ꜣj› n mwtꜣj ḥꜣty

[2] ꜣj n ḫprw‹w›ꜣj m ḫnm nḫt [sic] ‹rꜣj m› ḏꜣḏt wsjr

[3] jrj nṯrw ˹m ‹jr› rqꜣk ‹rꜣj›˺ m-bꜣḥ jj-mḫꜣt

[4] ntk kꜣw‹ꜣj› jmj ḫtꜣj ḫnmw swḏꜣ

[5] ḥrwꜣj prꜣk r b‹w›-nfr ḥn{t}

[6] ꜣn jm ‹m› sḫnš rn‹ꜣj› ‹n› šny‹t› jr{r}jw

[7] rmṯw m rḥr‹w›ꜣf r b‹w›-nfr ‹n› sḏm‹w›

Translation:

[1] <My> heart (jb) for my balance weight (mwt), my heart (ḥꜣty)

[2] of my transformation<s>! Do not <oppose me in> the tribunal of Osiris,

[3] creator of the gods. ˹Do not <make> your opposition <against me>˺ in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance.

[4] You are <my> kas within my body, (and) Khnum who makes sound

[5] my limbs. (When) you go forth to the Perfect Pla[ce] wherein we are equipped,

[6] <do not> cause <my> name to stink <to> the courtiers (who) make

[7] mankind in his lifetime <in> the Perfect Pl[ace] <of> the ˹divine˺ judge

Idiomatic Translation:

O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my mother! O my heart of my different forms! Do not stand up as a witness against me, do not be opposed to me in the tribunal, do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance, for you are my *ka* which was in my body, the protector who made my members hale. Go forth to the happy place

[74] Hieroglyphic text, transliteration and translation from Sagrillo (2011: 242-244) and idiomatic translation from (Taylor 2010: 45).

> whereto we speed; do not make my name stink to the Entourage who make men. Do not tell lies about me in the presence of the god.

The name of the deceased was often added to the inscription so that it would be known who the heart/*ib* belonged to; in the case of ***E.4.3.*** the amulet belonged to a scribe named Nakhtamun (Taylor 2010: 174).

5.1.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

In light of the information presented in the preceding chapters, this thesis offers the following interpretation as to the amulet's symbolic meaning, the purpose of the *ib* image and the amulet's final function:

Though the heart amulet can be linked to at least two divinities, it is far more likely that it is the ideal which they personify that was present in the function of the amulet. The personal ethics of *ma'at* and the link between the individual's behaviour and the maintenance of the cosmic order (Teeter 2001: 319) was meant to be exemplified through the righteous heart. In the combined form of both a vase and a heart, the symbolic iconographic signification of the amulet was as a vessel of the just to be filled with the light of the gods (De Sousa 2007a: 199-120). Yet it was meant to represent the physical heart of the person as well as the metaphorical seat of identity, which can be seen in the examples of the amulet type where the geometric designs and patterns were engraved to signify the arteries and veins and the 'handles' on either side of the object, the Auricles (**Fig. 56** & **57**).

Added to this is the hieroglyphic aspect. This is not only in that the *ib* glyph was three-dimensionally represented but also by adding the inscription from the *Book of the Dead, spell 30B* on both sides of the amulet. This double layered use of hieroglyphs could only have served to strengthen the magic that was believed to imbue the amulet. More so, as spells were believed to be "god's words" and it was thought that even the average spoken or written word could hold great power (Ritner 1993: 35). What cements the power-enhancing capabilities of the hieroglyphs is that this particular form of writing (which in itself was a demonstration of permanence (Teeter 2010: 156)) is very artistic in nature, reflecting stylised forms of the natural world. The interaction between the image and the word in ancient Egyptian works was of utmost symbolic importance and therefore almost certainly always deliberate. Wilkinson (1994: 152) writes:

> Egyptian paintings and sculptures may [ ] contain, or even be wholly composed of, hieroglyphic forms, and the interaction between writing and

> pictorial representation was one of major symbolic importance. In fact, the hieroglyphic signs form the very basis of Egyptian iconography, which was concerned with the function of making specific symbolic statements through pictorial rather than written means.

The strategic use of hieroglyphs on multiple levels can thus be interpreted as a means of guaranteeing the eternal magical value of the heart.

The words of the inscription on ***E.4.3.*** (written in the first person voice) make it plain that the spell was not only meant to enchant the heart into staying true to its master (Nakhtamun) during the weighing of the heart ceremony, but that it was representative of the scribe's own voice combined with the image of the *ib*. The amulet was personalised not only by adding the name of the owner of the heart but by ascribing the imploring written 'voice' in the spell to that person rather than applying a spell with a neutral or detached perspective. The spell further allows him to address his heart directly as "my heart" and "you are my *ka* which was in my body" (Taylor 2010: 45). This exchange highlights the complicated nature of the relationship of the various aspects of the self in the Egyptian religion.

The concept of the *ka* (*kꜣ*) has no natural equivalent in modern western societies and is therefore difficult to explain (Bolshakov 2001: 215). It is, however, one of the most important concepts in ancient Egyptian religion (Bolshakov 2001: 215). The concept existed in four main parts known as the internal *ka*, the external *ka*, the royal *ka* and the human *ka* (Bolshakov 2001: 215). Nakhtamun addresses his heart as his "*ka* which was in my body´ (Taylor 2010: 45), referring to the internal *ka*. For want of a better description (and for the sake of brevity) the internal *ka* can be described as a combination of concepts relating to sex and reproduction, one's "character/nature/temperament", "destiny/providence" and even be related through the word *ḫmt* "think" to a minor role similar to the *ba*, which was associated with the mind (Bolshakov 2001: 215).

From this information there can be deduced that the heart amulet of Nakhtamun was meant to represent an aspect of his inner self through the form of the *ib* that relates closely to the concept of the *ka*, which was meant (ensured by the inscription and hieroglyphic connotations) to represent, eternally and faithfully, the pure heart of the scribe before the deities.

5.2. The Viewer:

In the discussions on the three Egyptian amulets from chapters 3 and 4, this thesis determined that the likelihood of widespread visual literacy may have been considerable, perhaps somewhat in spite of the lack of literacy in the traditional sense on the broader

spectrum. This conclusion was drawn somewhat cautiously, but with relevant certainty within the strict context of this study as it pertains to the previous amulets and there was refrained from making any inferences on the part of non-Egyptians, as there was not enough evidence to support any theories in this capacity. However, with regards to ***E.4.3.*** there can be argued with equal relative certainty that those associated with the creation and use of the amulet would have understood the symbolic signification of the amuletic imagery and therefore the image-function relationship.

Though the heart amulet had been in use as early as the 11th Dynasty, the first known artistic renderings of this amulet come from the 18th Dynasty (De Sousa 2007b: 59). Both the archaeological and iconographic evidence suggests that from the 18th Dynasty onward the *ib*, which had until then been exclusively used in royal contexts and by royalty only, had begun to be used very selectively by the Theban elite (De Sousa 2007b: 61). That which had been a symbol of the Theban royal family's link to divinity, had become an icon used by those who had a close and favourable connection to the king (De Sousa 2007b: 61). It is believed that the "notorious absence" of the heart amulet from depictions of the Amarna period may very well be because of this close association with the elites and royals of Thebes (De Sousa 2007b: 61).

E.4.3. dates to more or less the time between the 19th and 18th Dynasties, and the moniker on the amulet marks it as belonging to "the Royal Scribe and Scribe of the Divine Offerings of all the Gods" Nakhtamun (Taylor 2010: 174). This indicates that the amulet may well be an early example of the privileges enjoyed by those who had close associations with the king. It was often the case that the fashions of amuletic use changed (Pinch 2010: 112) and the transferral of an essential royal icon would have been a noteworthy occasion. "Anything associated with royalty would have *heka* […] [and] among the illiterate, the hieroglyphic script was thought to have an amuletic power in itself" (Pinch 2010: 111). However, Pinch (2010: 112) notes that from early on in Egyptian history, "objects which archaeologists have classed as amulets were regularly included in burials" and states that "it is impossible to be sure what such objects meant to the grave-owner".

Despite this, one could counter by arguing that the symbolic meaning of the *ib*, being both image and word, could hardly have been lost on someone who was literate, especially a scribe. Since hieroglyphics is a script consisting entirely of images/icons, the scribe Nakhtamun would have been well versed in the literal and symbolic use of the various glyphs. Furthermore the social significance of being allowed its use in a time when it was closely related to the royals and elites of the Egyptian hierarchy could not have been missed. It seems highly unlikely therefore that the scribe Nakhtamun would not have been aware of the significance of the amuletic image or the image-function relationship of the amulet (had he used it during his life).

As to the purpose or added effect of the inscription; the discussion in the previous section of this thesis has already touched on the essential principles. Spells like the one on the amulet from chapter 30B of the *Book of the Dead*, were considered to be words of the divine (Ritner 1993: 35) and the written word (or hieroglyph) was essentially power in perpetuity (Teeter 2010: 156) – a continuous manifestation of the power of the divine. What was written would come to pass and would not fail throughout all time. The belief that the written word was a physical representation of the spoken word – which in itself held great power (Ritner 1993: 35) – and that the spell was written in a tone that would represent the owner of the amulet, indicates that the inscription was not only meant to enhance the inherent magic of the image. It was also meant to enhance the magic and binding power of the scribe's voice by personalising it. Names were believed to have held incredible power (Pinch 2010: 112). By combining the spell with Nakhtamun's name and a first person voice/tone[75] essentially gives the scribe complete control over his own heart.

The words of the spell add to this in that it implores the heart to stay true to its owner: "[do] not stand up as a witness against me, do not be opposed to me in the tribunal, do not be hostile to me in the presence of the Keeper of the Balance" (Taylor 2010: 45). The words magically manipulate the heart into testifying in favour of its owner (Müller-Winkler 1987: 212) so that the scribe's heart will balance against the feather of ma'at during the weighing of the heart ceremony and the scribe will be granted the right to enter into the Afterlife with Osiris (Lesko 2001a: 195).

The purpose of the added inscription is thus the manipulation of the heart to ensure a favourable outcome in the tribunal; its effect, the enhancement and maintenance of the magic vested in the word and image of the *ib*. Considering the symbolism of the heart amulet and the vast array of these amulets without inscriptions (e.g. **Fig. 55** & **56**), it does not appear as though the function of the amulet hinges on the additional spell, though it is clearly heightened by it.

5.3. The Dogs of Nineveh, Mesopotamia

5.3.1. Amulet Description:

These five figurines are all made of clay and had all originally been painted. On the left side of each dog is a short inscription that denotes their purpose. The upper parts of the dogs had been sculpted in the round while the lower parts between the legs are up against a rock-like 'background'. A certain amount of detail had been invested in these figures and the shapes

[75] Refer to **5.1.3. Intrinsic Meaning**.

of the heads and ears, the facial features, the bodies, legs, paws, hind-quarters and tails can all be clearly discerned. An effort has also been made to provide a sense of texture through the use of various incised markings on the body, especially the ‘mane’ and ribs. All of the dogs are standing squared on all fours and seemingly at attention, thus indicating a feeling of alertness. Some of the dogs have sustained some slight damage, however, on most the detail is so clear that even individual toes can be made out. The canine figure that will be used as an example in the discussion about these amulets will be the one on the far right at the back.

Figure 60: M.4.3. ca. 645 BCE, Inscribed canine amulets in the round.

5.3.2. Cultural Significance:

As much of what is relevant to these amulets within the cultural contexts has already been discussed in chapter 3, this thesis does not intend to review the same discussion here. Rather, the cultural significance associated with these amulets and the canine images they represent will be addressed from a slightly different vantage point, intended as an addition to the already present information. First: evidence surrounding canine behaviour, the influence of domestication and the practice of burial will be examined.

The appearance of domesticated canine breeds has already been established in the Ancient Near East as early as the Epipalaeolithic period some "20,000 years after the carving of the Aurignacian 'Lion-Man'" (Rice 2006: 7). These canines were already completely morphologically developed to the point that the species would be recognisable today (Rice 2006: 7). It can therefore be deduced that the domesticated process had – by this time – been many years in the making, if not thousands. Yet, it should be noted that:

> [ ] although the belief that all domesticated dogs descend from the wolf is strong and widely supported by the most competent authorities and those specialists whose opinions demand respect, it is at best a presumption: there is no absolute, scientific proof of an exclusively wolfish descent. However, the strongest argument advanced for a lupoid ancestry of dogs is the wolf-like *behaviour* of modern strains of dog.
>
> (Rice 2006: 2)

This should cause caution, however, as to the question of the nature of the model of behaviour on which these arguments are based. Though a lupoid descent is highly probable, arguments based mainly on behaviour is questionable. More recent studies have indicated that significant aspects of the behavioural patterns of domestic dogs can be attributed to the development and size of certain areas of the brain (Zeder 2012: 169). These studies indicate that the reduction in brain-size "is an early response to the strong selective pressure for tameness and lowered reactivity that is a core, essentially universal, feature of animal domestication" (Zeder 2012: 169). The limbic system of the brains of domestic dogs (among others) show a 40% decrease in size in comparison to their wild cousins/"progenitors"[76].

The brain's limbic system is composed of "the hippocampus, the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the amygdala […] [which] regulates endocrine function and the automatic nervous system" (Zeder 2012: 169).

> [These] in turn, influence behaviours like aggression, wariness, and responses to environmentally induced stress. The dramatic reduction in the size of this portion of the brain in domesticates can be directly linked to an increase in the thresholds for the display of behaviours such as aggression, fear, and flight that result in the overall reduction in reactivity.[77]

[76] Kruska (1988) as referenced by Zeder (2012: 169).
[77] See Kruska (1988: 221); Price (2002: 89) and Zeder (2012: 169).

Thus the behaviour of dogs in itself cannot necessarily stand as the foundation for arguments concerning a lupoid decent as much as the consequence of domestication and repeated breeding. The question of wolf ancestry aside, a particular point of interest is the conditional development of attributes in behaviour that focuses on the *display* of aggression over the *act*. While the dog's bark may be worse than its bite, the instinct to scare off rather than simply attack also makes them the ideal guardians in largely populated societies like those in Mesopotamia, as elsewhere (Scurlock 2002a: 364). It also accounts for the necessity of the inscriptions[78].

The Assyrians' (and Babylonians') belief that an additional source of protection could be had, especially against supernatural entities, by burying canine figurines beneath the foundations of doorways and temples[79], possibly stems from practices founded in prehistoric times (Campbell et al 2014: 36). In reference to the South-eastern Turkey 'Death Pit' from Domuztepe (an area that fell under Assyrian control at a later stage), where strong signs of cannibalistic practices have been found[80], Campbell et al (2014: 35-36) writes:

> After the sealing of the Death Pit, individual dog bones were placed around its periphery in a way that parallels the distribution of human bone fragments in the same area. […] Elsewhere dog remains on the site are very rare […] [which] indicates that dogs were not common food animals. […] The placement of the dogs […] are mainly [ ] among the human remains, perhaps suggesting a protective aspect. The dog elements later placed above and around the [ ] Pit could also be seen as guarding the remains within the pit or, conversely, protecting those still living from danger from the buried material. Certainly the area of the Death Pit subsequently remained distinct from domestic activities, which may suggest that, despite being in the heart of the settlement, burial alone was not sufficient to achieve a distance between the living and the buried.

Though clearly not the origin of the practice, Domuztepe serves as an interesting example of *how* the tradition *may have* developed. The processes involved in the development of ritual practices according to which one may move from using dog remains as guardians against the spirits of the dead to inscribed canine figurines that guard against other malevolent entities such as the demon *Lamaštu* (Scurlock 2002a: 364), may not necessarily be mutually exclusive.

[78] Refer to **5.3.2. Material Symbolism**.
[79] See Van Buren (1951: 56) and Scurlock (2002a: 364).
[80] Campbell et al (2014: 31).

Another cultural aspect that should be considered here is the very addition of the inscriptions on these amulets and significance of writing in this context. Mesopotamia has multiple traditions surrounding the invention of writing, some of which (quite contrary to other cultures, including Egypt) hold that writing was an invention of man without the intervention of divinities (Woods 2010b: 34-35). In the account of *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (lines 500-506)[81], Enmerkar invents writing so that the messenger – whose mouth was heavy – and who was sent between him, the Lord of Kulab, and his rival, the Lord of Aratta, would be able to accurately transmit Enmerkar's message (Vanstiphout 2003: 85). In another account Inanna steals the basic element or "essences" from her father Enki after getting him intoxicated and shares these elements, including the "scribe's craft", with her city Uruk (Woods 2010b: 35). Another story tells of Oannes, a part-fish and part-man creature who emerges from the Erythrean Sea during the day to teach humanity "all that was necessary for civilisation", and returning to the waters at night – his teachings being so complete that nothing further had been discovered thereafter" (Woods 2010b: 35).

Regardless of *how* it truly came about, from the mid-third millennium onward writing and images had been very closely interwoven in Mesopotamian cultures (Nunn 2019: 54). "Texts were extremely significant regardless of the degree of literacy, which was in all periods of antiquity rather limited" (Nunn 2019: 54). Though some centuries elapsed before writing and images were combined (Nunn 2019: 56), from the Dynastic II period onward, many objects regardless of scale or material were inscribed with the cuneiform script[82]. Similarly to ancient Egypt, the significance of the connection between the spoken word and writing can also be seen in the development of cuneiform, the root of which is the logogram or word sign (Woods 2010b: 43). Furthermore, that writing was connected to magic can be seen in the plethora of incantations, spells, religious texts, behavioural omens, inscriptions and more that address magical problems and practices[83].

5.3.3. Material Symbolism:

M.4.3. much like the previous canine amulet from Nimrud (***M.2.1.***) has the basic shape and features associated with domestic canines and the small size may be similarly linked to the function of the amulet rather than being of overt symbolic importance. On the other hand, the canine amulets from Nineveh hold much more detail. Additional attributes include, clearly defined, the eyes, the snout and mouth, the bodily features like the ribs, toes and musculature, and slight markings around the neck to indicate the hair of the animals. Yet

[81] Referenced from Vanstiphout (2003: 85).
[82] Braun-Holzinger (1991) and Rohn (2011) as referenced by Nunn (2019: 56).
[83] See Bertman (2003: 117) and Yuhong (2001: 32).

unlike ***M.2.1.*** these canines are not made of bronze but rather of fired clay; which in itself may be related more to the accessibility of the material rather than the symbolic signification.

What is noteworthy and highly symbolic of ***M.4.3.*** is the fact that the amulet was used in conjunction with four others of the same type (**Fig. 60** & **61**). Numbers had an equally significant role in the Mesopotamian cultures as they had in Egypt. Dog figurines made of bronze were often used in groups of seven, which was considered the most religiously significant number in the Assyrian and Babylonian cultures (Black & Green 1992: 70, 144-145). Fired clay figurines, as those that ***M.4.3.*** belongs to were often used as a part of two sets of five and were buried in groups on either side of doorways (Black & Green 1992: 70).

Figure 61: Canine amulets from Nineveh, ca. 645 BCE, Neo-Assyrian period (BM: 30005).

Thus the prevalence of the amulets rested on the magical associations with the numbers five and ten. Instruction was also provided in ritual text that indicated that each pair of the group had to be painted in a different colour and that one of each should be buried on either side (Van Buren 1951: 56). In **Fig. 61** the black, white and red pigment on some of the amulets can still be discerned. Similarly, it was also believed that by adding the hair from the tail of a virgin she-goat onto the body of the canines, the amulets would be particularly effective against *Lamaštu* (Scurlock 2002a: 364).

As indicated in the previous section, displays of aggression are a definitive mark of the domesticated canine. The same behaviour can be observed to some extent through the posture of the dogs in **Fig. 61** where the dogs are clearly displayed on alert; standing upright, facing forward as if paying close attention, some even leaning forward slightly as if intending to spring forward. However, as discussed above, the animals' behaviour often favour displays of aggression over the act itself with a marked reduction in reactive behaviour[84].

Likely because of this attribute these amulets are almost always inscribed in cuneiform with commands such as "Don't think it over, open your mouth!" and "Don't think it over, bite!" (Scurlock 2002a: 364), or in the case of ***M.4.3.*** the words "Loud is his bark!", which brings to mind the saying; his bark is worse than his bite. These commands appear to have been meant to compensate for the possibility of a delayed reaction, through the magic

[84] See Kruska (1988: 221); Price (2002: 89) and Zeder (2012: 169).

vested in the written commands, so that the canine spirits invoked through the amulets would not hesitate to attack malevolent forces.

5.3.4. Intrinsic Meaning:

In light of the information discussed in the preceding chapters, this thesis offers the following interpretation as to the amulet's symbolic meaning, the purpose of the canine image and the amulet's final function:

M.4.3. like its companion piece ***M.2.1.*** takes the three dimensional shape of a domestic canine in order to magically invoke the spirit of the dogs they represent. The canine spirits were intended to protect the building in which they were placed, in the specific case of ***M.4.3.*** the North-Palace at Nineveh[85]. This amulet group's use and the design of these types of canine amulets were specifically meant to be employed against supernatural malevolent entities (Scurlock 2002a: 364). These amulets are not associated with any specific deities as their role is not predominantly religiously based, but rather to secure protection as quite literal guard dogs (Black & Green 1992: 70).

However, it should be noted that despite this, a vague association with Gula and the other healing deities remains through the very fact that these amulets were frequently seen as a potent method of guarding against *Lamaštu* (Scurlock 2002a: 364). *Lamaštu*, often depicted in modern works as a demoness, may have been considered a type of divinity based on the way the name was written in cuneiform (Black & Green 1992: 115-116). References to her can be found in such as "*ṣalmāʾ nija ana la-maš-ti mārat Anim tapqida*" translated as "you (witches) have handed over figurines representing me to the *l*.-demon, the daughter of Anu"; *"iskip la-maš-tu šadâ uštē[li]*" – "he repulsed the *l*.-demon, sending (her) back to the "Mountain"; and "may the goddess Annunītu crush *mārtam pašittam* ^{d}*DÌM.ME ekkēmtam*" – "the … daughter, the snatcher-demon *l*." (CAD L 1973: 66). The connection between Gula, the canine amulets and *Lamaštu*, lies in the fact that one of the roles of the demoness was as the bringer of disease (Black & Green 1992: 116). Gula, then, as the goddess of healing and the domestic dog – as her cultic symbol (Black & Green 1992: 70) – would have been the natural counter to the demoness.

Not necessarily mass-produced, these types of amulets were clearly very popular as they were often prescribed as foundation deposits (Black & Green 1992: 70). The combined use of posture and inscription could indicate close observation of nature and a deep understanding of the behaviour of the animals themselves[86]. The fact that canines are

[85] Refer to Catalogue ***M.4.3.***
[86] Refer to **5.4.2. Cultural Significance** & **5.4.3. Material Symbolism**.

particularly inclined to learn and follow commands appears to have been well noted and conferred onto the amulets via the use of the inscriptions. The orders written on the left side of their bodies not to hesitate, but to attack the enemy, would have ensured that the canine spirits that were 'summoned' through the shape of the amulet would fulfil their duty as needed.

From this there can be deduced that much like the Nimrud amulet, ***M.4.3.*** was meant to invoke the spirit of a domestic canine that would stand guard the palace at Nineveh against supernatural and mundane intruders, especially the demoness *Lamaštu*. With some associations with the healing divinities, these dogs were ideal guardians against the demon.

5.4. The Viewer:

In the third and fourth chapters of this thesis the possibility and extent of visual literacy existing within the Mesopotamian cultures was briefly considered. It was determined, within the context of this study, that – pertaining specifically to minor art – a certain degree of conscious visual awareness of the symbolism of images may have been present; more so with the canine amulet from Nimrud than with the others. Through their shared attributes, and the fact that ***M.4.3.*** only dates to more or less a century after its Nimrud companion, a similar conclusion could be drawn here.

By the seventh century BCE, the period to which ***M.4.3.*** has been dated, the use of canine amulets to guards doorways and entryways was a well-known and recognised practice. It was commonly recommended that such amulets be used[87]. Considering the attention to detail on the amulets, the behavioural elements present in the posture and the use of the added inscriptions, it would appear that the Assyrian's awareness of canine nature and attributes was well formed. The added inscriptions appear to have acted in a way that compensates for the trait of lowered reactivity in domesticated dogs through the given commands (Zeder 2012: 169), while at the same time enhancing and cementing the magical function of the figurines (Nunn 2019: 55). The inscriptions do not, however, appear to have predetermined the function of the amulet in any way, as much as it acted as a supporting element to it.

Furthermore, it is entirely possible that the method of implementing these artefacts in Assyrian tradition may have stemmed from more ancient and complicated rituals regarding disposal, burial and commemoration practices. "Parallels can be observed in the way in which some animal remains were disposed of, particularly striking with dogs and feasting debris, as well as a broader practice of the deliberate burial of certain types of objects" (Campbell et al. 2014: 27). A similar adherence to this type of tradition can also be seen in

[87] See Scurlock (2002a: 364) and Black & Green (1992: 70).

the use of the eye-idols from Tell Brak, which were discovered within the foundations of the Eye Temple, likely having been deliberately buried/deposited there for religious/magical purposes. Should the two forms of ritual practice (or traditions similar to these) have developed systematically from one into another, or as separate branches of the same tree, this thesis would propose it unlikely that the significance or symbolic associations of the elements involved in such practices should be unknown to their practitioners.

Given the pervasiveness of the canine presence in ancient Mesopotamia, the clear anatomical and behavioural intent vested in the canine images of the amulets, the focus and role of the added inscriptions as well as the combination of the amuletic function with the ritual practice of burial, and finally, the mythological associations through both Gula and *Lamaštu*, this thesis would argue that it is highly unlikely that the symbolic signification of these amulets were not understood by their users.

5.5. Deductions:

In this chapter the emphasis of the study has been placed on neither three-dimensional nor two-dimensional images as before, but rather on the combination of words and images and the effect of adding voice to image. By studying the inscribed heart amulet of Nakhtamun and the canine amulets from the palace at Nineveh, one can observe the differences and similarities in the way inscriptions are employed with regards to amuletic magic, despite the varying contexts within which the two amulets were used. In light of the discussions in this chapter, the following inferences have been made regarding the amuletic images, their function, meaning and influence with regards to the use of amulets in their respective cultural environments:

The ancient Egyptian heart amulet was mainly used within funerary contexts as the symbol representing the heart of the deceased. It acted as vessel of the person which, if proven righteous and in accordance with the concept of ma‘at, would be filled with the light of the deities and allow its owner to live on in the Afterlife with Osiris. In this capacity the heart was meant to act as a witness on behalf of its owner in the weighing of the heart ceremony and could, through magical means (such as the hieroglyphic inscription of spell 30B from the *Book of the Dead*) be manipulated into testifying in its owner’s favour.

This thesis has argued that the added inscription from the *Book of the Dead* does not influence the way in which the amulet was used, but rather enhances the magic it contains. This was based on the fact that the inscription does not dictate what the amulet is meant to do as much as it attempts to manipulate the heart into working for its owner by combining the hieroglyphic spell with the *ib* image – an in-the-round rendering of the same hieroglyph/word – in order to cement the magical power of the amulet itself.

The purpose of the amulet is thus to ensure the eternal future of the deceased by balancing as the righteous heart against the feather ma'at and thereby protecting their existence within the Afterlife. The implication for action imbedded in the function of ***E.4.3.*** is the prevention of the destruction of the self after death, during the tribunal judgement. The comprehension of this symbolism is under no doubt and in so doing indicates conscious awareness as to the image-function relationship of the amulet as well as the added effect of the inscription.

The Mesopotamian canine amulet was used by burying the figures underneath the foundations of doorways and entryways on either side. Painted different colours and inscribed on the left side of their bodies, these canines were specifically used to deter any malevolent entities that attempted to enter the place which they guarded and were especially effective against the demoness *Lamaštu*. The figurines were meant to invoke the spirits of the dogs they represented to provide constant vigilant protection against their master's enemies.

The perspective of this thesis is that the inscriptions on the bodies of the canines found in the shape of the amulets were not intended to dictate the function of the amulet, but rather to enhance the magic already present in the image by acting as a support for the amulet's protective role. This argument is based on the influence on behavioural traits in domestic canines due to the reduction in the size of the limbic system in the brain in comparison to their lupoid ancestors – traits that the Assyrians would have been able to observe. The orders contained in the inscriptions appear to comprehend and compensate for a lowering of physical aggression and reactive behaviour in the canines by promoting physical attacks on any perceived enemies.

Hence the purpose of the amulet was to ensure the protection of a specific place or area by invoking the spirits of dogs and urging them to attack enemies or intruders of the supernatural kind. The implication for action rooted in function of ***M.4.3.*** the prevention of harm through malicious forces beyond human control. The comprehension of this symbolism on the part of the Assyrian people appears highly likely and in so doing indicates conscious influence with regards to the image-function relationship of the amulet.

Resultantly, both amulets above appear to be relevant examples of the proposed phenomenon in this thesis.

6. The Amulets and the Domains of Effecting Control

Earlier in this thesis it was proposed to view the use of magic as a way of attempting to implement control in a person's environment over those things within the domains of experience that cannot be controlled through human means alone. The theory behind this

stance was briefly discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis and will continue to form the basis of the discussion to follow here. The eight amulets studied in the previous chapters all exhibit this intent and can be identified within the four categories of control[88]. The development of images within the cultural consciousness of certain communities relates the way that the conception of *meaning* interacts with perception experience. Nunn (2019: 55) writes:

> In the ancient Near East, images were created to be effective. Their efficacy could be enhanced by combining different categories of experience: image and dance, image and music or in a more permanent expression, image and text.

In the case of these amulets it is the combination of image (or as with the latter cases, image and text) and magic. The image and the inscriptions, each in their own way aim toward the enhancement of the object's magic. The images, however, are also intricately connected to the purpose of the amulets while the inscriptions merely serve to support their function. Since ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian images were also concepts in themselves, "each motif, from floral ornament to the lion hunt" added symbolic and religious significance to the purpose of each object (Nunn 2019: 63). As a result, each amulet functions within the four contexts of the domains of control[89] at both a primary and secondary level.

The function at the primary level consists of the elements of the amulet that make up the basic magical-religious significance, such as the association with divinities, common use through association and ritualistic function. In the case of ***E.1.1.*** it is the use of the amulet as a dedicatory figurine to gain the favour of the divinity Bastet so that she may grant aid with pregnancy, a pregnant mother and the safe birth of an infant; for ***E.2.1.*** it is giving protection and safe passage to its bearer in times of turmoil through its association with the deity Wepwawet; for ***M.1.1.*** it is protection against lion attacks; for ***M.2.1.*** and ***M.4.3.*** it is the guardianship and defence of certain places or buildings and possibly to earn the protection of the divinity Gula against harmful entities that cause illness; for ***E.3.2.*** complete protection and regenerative function of the symbol that is associated mainly with Horus; for ***M.3.2.*** it is the guardianship and protection of the Eye Deity; and for ***E.4.3.*** it is the exemplification of the righteous heart before the judges at the tribunal of the weighing of the heart ceremony. With each of these functions the amulets mainly fall into the category of Interactive (***E.1.1., E.2.1., M.2.1*** &***, M.3.4, E.3.2.,*** & ***M.3.2.***), Instrumental (***M.1.1.***) or Volitional Bodily Control (***E.4.3.***).

The function at the secondary level consists of the implementation and manifestation of the additional symbolic signifiers. For ***E.1.1.*** and ***E.2.1.*** that entails the manifestation of the

[88] Refer to **2.3. The Theory**.
[89] Refer to **Fig. 10** and Van Binsbergen & Wiggermann (1999: 11-15).

presence of the deities in the shape of the amulets; for ***M.1.1.***, ***M.2.1.*** and ***M.4.3.*** a similar manifestation of the animalian spirits; for ***E.3.2.*** it entails extended protection of Horus and Sekhmet as well as the manifestation of Horus as Pharaoh; for ***E.4.3.*** it is the preservation the self through the symbol as the vessel that is the seat of consciousness to be filled with the life-giving light of the Osiris; and for ***M.3.2.*** it is the manifestation of identification before the divinity of the dedicators of the amulets. In these contexts the function of the amulets may fall into one or more of the categories, depending on the magical goal, as follows: Interactive (***E.1.1., E.2.1., M.1.1., M.2.1., E.3.2., M.3.2.***), Instrumental (***M.1.1., M.2.1., M.4.3.***), Volitional Bodily (***E.4.3.***) and Hegemonic Control (***E.3.2.***).

The majority of the amuletic functions fall into the Interactive category of Control which stems from the motivation of an individual to implement a sense of control over their direct environment. As object of protection, the majority of amulets are likely to fall quite naturally into this category, whilst ***M.1.1.*** serves as a basic example of an object whose function is fundamentally influenced by the consequences of uncontrolled interaction with nature and thus falls into the category of Instrumental Control. ***E.4.3.*** on the other hand, as the symbol of the seat of consciousness and due to its role in the weighing of the heart ceremony as an attempt to preserve the self after death, falls into the category of Volitional Bodily Control – which is concerned with the emergence and development of the self. The function of an amuletic symbol within the context of the Hegemonic category of Control is rarer, however, the use of the amuletic symbolism of ***E.3.2.*** within the Horus-Pharaoh set is an example of an indirect attempt at control of the environment through large scale, formal institutionalism, even if only as a propagandistic tool.

By dividing the amulets into these categories according to their primary and secondary functions, it becomes somewhat clearer how the use of amulets and practice of amuletic magic is utilised within various contexts as manifestations of the human endeavour to implement a sense/form of control over their environment and domains of experience.

PART III: Findings

7. Interpreting the Evidence

Although many of the amulets in the case studies of this thesis indicate conscious use of images with regard to the purpose of amulets, the question as to whether the images influence or predetermine the function of the amulet cannot be answered as easily. In all of the cases presented in the preceding chapters the magical goal of the amulet, the reason or motivation for its use, appears to be dependent on the presence of the images.

The canine and feline amulets contain the images of the animals either because they are affiliated with the deities being called upon or because they represent the animalian spirits being invoked. The *wedjat eye* and the eye-idols show a clear preference for the anatomical features and reflect the watchful and protective power of the deities associated with the symbol; and the *ib* takes the very form of the heart as a vessel of the self that is to be tried in the tribunal before the divine judges. However, rather than stipulating that this indicates a predetermined function based on the image, one could just as easily argue that the function determines what image will be used. As a result the answer to this final question remains uncertain and will require further study before a definitive decision can be made either way.

In light of this, this thesis will briefly discuss below the shortcomings of this study before making recommendations for further lines of pursuit.

7.1. Limitations of the Study

Throughout this study the following limitations have been observed:

- The eight amulets contained in the corpus of this study, though useful within the context of the case-studies, are not nearly enough to draw any fixed conclusions as to the proposed phenomenon at the heart of the research that has been done. In order to fully grasp the scope of what has been attempted only in small measure here, the body of artefacts will need to be substantially larger. With a wider variety of artefacts to examine, not only within the context of one culture or a set combination of more – but across the board – will allow a determination to be made as to whether *this* use of imagery is as universal as the use of amulets, or whether it is culturally specific or of noteworthy use at all.
- Despite all attempts to be as thorough as possible within the confines of this thesis with regards to the discussions of the various amulets, there is clearly still more that could be said. In order to fully understand the image-function relationships of these

amulets more in-depth studies are required. Unable to provide this here, this thesis acknowledges that what has been stated within the case studies above can only possibly be contextually relevant and cannot therefore be applied lightly on more general terms.

- All of the amulet examples contained in this study consist of relatively simplified designs that form (for the most part) only a single image. The research conducted in this thesis does thus not account for artefacts that have amuletic value that contain more than one form or design. The conclusions that have been drawn about the connections within the image-function relationships of these amulets are not necessarily applicable to other amuletic types with more complicated/'narrative-style' images such as cylinder or stamp seals.
- In order to broaden the spectrum of amulets used within this study less consideration was given to the time periods from which the eight amulets originate. The intent was to reserve the focus of the case studies for the identification of the proposed phenomenon rather than the development of the images themselves. However, the significance of the conscious and cultural development of the amuletic images, and the absence of a proper discussion toward this end, cannot wholly be ignored. While some small effort has been made to account for the dating of the artefacts, the value of a more in-depth analysis of this aspect of the imagery should not be dismissed. Though the time period from which the artefact dates is important to any iconographic study, this thesis recognizes that the development of icons through time is equally significant.

Although other limitations may be present in this thesis, the four main constraints of the study can be seen summarised here.

7.2. Recommendations for Further Studies

In light of the information in the previous section, this thesis would make the following recommendations for further studies in this regard:

- First, this thesis would recommend a line of inquiry that pursues not only the more simplistic images such as those in the amulets that were the focus of these case studies, but also more complicated compositions such as can be found on pectorals, cylinder and stamp seals, and amuletic plaques. Images such as these that signify on multiple levels will be able to provide more intricate source material to study with

regards to the symbolic signification of images and their possible influence on the use of certain artefacts. It is possible that a thorough study of such images may reveal more compelling evidence than can be found in those represented here. Though some of these amulets – such as the Egyptian feline amulet, the *wedjat eye* and the heart amulet for example – offered more elaborate modes of signification, artefacts consisting of multiple images and multiple levels of symbolic rendering require not only discernment of the inherent symbolism in conjunction with the amuletic function, but also in the context of each other.

- Secondly, this thesis would recommend focussing more on the psychological/ conscious development of the images used for amuletic purposes as well as their symbolic meaning. Since the use of amulets fall in and out of fashion depending – probably – on the current significance of specific icons and their meaning, the ebb and flow of an image's prominence may divulge more about individual and cultural identity as it relates to the practice of ritual magic at any given time, than simply studying the image in the context of the use of the artefact only. An awareness of the origin of the amulet in terms of place and time, in combination with an understanding of the symbolic preferences of any given era, could form the foundation of our understanding of the degree to which images may influence function.
- Finally, this thesis would recommend – with specific reference to animalian images – expanding the research conducted into the biological behavioural spheres of animal studies in order to gain a greater understanding of the reasoning behind the symbolic significance of certain icons. It is easy to remain focussed on interpretations of cultural intent and forget to ask why certain connotations are attributed to animal images. Hence the different, sometimes widely varying, qualities assigned to them through association. A greater understanding of animal behaviour and how it relates to their biological development, as well as knowledge of aspects of their behaviour in general, may allow investigations into animal iconography more accuracy of their symbolic interpretations.

These recommendations stem from the observations of not only what these case studies did not address but also from what they did and how future studies along these lines may benefit from these additional perspectives. Although the constraints of this thesis would not have allowed for further investigations into these avenues, their addition to this study would have garnered a much deeper understanding of the proposed phenomenon.

7.3. Conclusion

Amulets are a surprisingly difficult subject to address. Not only is the practice of ritual magic extremely nuanced, but the complicated, layered use of highly symbolic imagery makes it hard to address the interactions between them from every relevant angle. Furthermore, the total sum of our knowledge of these artefacts and practices is nowhere near where it ought to be in order to make anything more than somewhat educated guesses. This is not only due to a lack of relevant discussions on more specific aspects of iconographic elements[90], but also due to a gap in certain areas of archaeological research (such as is the case with the eye-idols) and a want towards more interdisciplinary awareness[91].

On the whole, this specific line of academic inquiry makes for an interesting perspective from which to approach this type of subject matter and may yield new information in this field if given the opportunity to further develop.

[90] Refer to **1.1.2. Research Problem, Thesis Aim and Hypothesis**
[91] See **7.2. Recommendations for Further Studies**

Corpus

E.1.1.

Metropolitan Museum of Art Online

Origin: Egypt, Late Period - Ptolemaic Period

Dating: ca. 664-30 BCE

Collection: MMA, 30.8.104

Length: 8.4 cm

Width: 4.5 cm

Type: Figurine, Amulet

Breadth: 11.8-13.4 cm (with tang)

Material: Cupreous Metal

Bibliography:

www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/572106?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=30.8.104&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

Description:

Bastet was a powerful goddess of Lower Egypt, one who was protective and could bring about great prosperity. In zoomorphic form, she was represented as a cat and cats were considered sacred to her. As a cat, she is poised and alert, on guard against external forces. Like cat-headed Bastet statuettes, these seated cats often have special adornments. This figure has ear piercings for earrings, probably of precious metal, an incised scarab on the top of its head, and a wedjet amulet hanging from its neck.

The wedjet eye, or Eye of Horus, was personified by the goddess Wadjet, who was closely linked with Bastet as both goddesses were feline protectors of Lower Egypt. Cat statuettes like this one were among some of the most common zoomorphic dedications of the Late and Ptolemaic Periods. Small statuettes would have been dedicated as offerings to temples or deposited in catacombs alongside cat mummies, as at the extensive catacombs at Bubastis and Saqqara. Sometimes larger hollow examples held a cat mummy inside.

E.2.1.

British Museum Online

Origin: Cyrene, Meroitic Period

Dating: Late 1st Century BCE

Collection: BM, EA68502
Reg. # 1859,1222.2

Length: 3.10cm

Width:

Breadth:

Type: Amulet

Material: Gold

Bibliography:

Andrews, C. 1990. *Ancient Egyptian Jewellery*. London: British Museum Press.

Andrews, C. 1994. *Amulets of Ancient Egypt*. London: British Museum Press.

www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA68502

Description:

Gold amulet: cast gold, long-eared, long tailed animal identified as a canine but with hooves. The suspension loops are on the left side, two on the body, and two on the base.

Gold amulet in the form of a dog or a jackal.

M.1.1.

Origin: Southern Mesopotamia, Early Dynastic I

Dating: ca. 2900-2700 BCE`

Collection: MMA, 58.30.1

Length: 10.6 cm

Width: 2.2 cm

Type: Shell-ornament, Amulet

Breadth:

Material: Shell

Metropolitan Museum of Art Online

Bibliography:

Wilkinson, C.K. 1958. Ancient Near Eastern Art. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 17(2): 40-41.

www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324730?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=58.30.1&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

Description:

This small object carved from a piece of shell depicts a reclining lion with head resting on his front paws. The elements of the animal's body are very simply modeled: haunches, body, shoulders and front paws, and head can be identified. The back is straight and the belly hangs down slightly. Small drilled holes mark the mane, and larger holes indicate the eyes and ears. Traces of pigment in these holes suggest that they were originally inlaid with material in a contrasting colour. Lions were one of the most frequently represented animals in the art of Mesopotamia from a very early period on, and were often shown in combat with an adversary, either human of supernatural. This object may have been used as an amulet, harnessing the enormous power of this fearsome animal.

M.2.1.

Metropolitan Museum of Art Online

Origin: Mesopotamia, Nimrud, Neo-Assyrian Period

Dating: ca. 9th-8th century BCE

Collection: MMA, 54.117.23

Length: 3.1 cm

Width: 4 cm

Type: Metalwork-sculpture, Amulet

Breadth: 1.3 cm

Material: Bronze

Bibliography:

Lines. J. 1955. Ivories from Nimrud. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 13: 242-243.

Mallowan, M.E.L. 1952. Ivories of Unsurpassed Magnificence: The Fonest and Largest from the Ancient Near East Discoveries in this Season's Excavations at Nimrud. *Illustrated London News*, p.254, Fig. 3.

Mallowan, M.E.L. 1966. *Nimrud and its Remains I.* London: Collins.

Muscarella, O.W. 1988. *Bronze and Iron: Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

www.metmuseum.org/art/cpllection/search/323812?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=54.117.23&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

Description:

Cast in bronze, this figurine represents a dog with his head thrust forward in a posture of alertness, pointed ears pricked up, and curled tail. The dog stands solidly on all four feet, suggesting that it is keeping watch rather than in motion. The legs are relatively short and the body compact, suggesting a dog smaller than the mastiffs sometimes represented as guard dogs in Mesopotamian art, such as the large terra cotta sculpture on display in the museum (1989.233). This small bronze was found in a well in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud along with other bronze dogs, finely carved ivory furniture elements, and other palace furnishings. It is likely that these objects were thrown in the well by the conquering armies who looted the palace during the defeat of Assyria by a coalition of Babylonians and Iranian peoples in 612 BCE.

Dogs were associated with several Mesopotamian gods, especially the healing goddess Gula. Clay or bronze dog figurines were frequently placed under the floors of buildings to guard structures from evil during the late second and early first millennium BCE, a magical act that recalls the use of actual dogs as watchful guardians. Five clay dogs were excavated under a doorway in a later Assyrian palace at Nineveh and are now in the collection of the British Museum. The dogs were painted vivid colours and inscribed with short phrases describing their functions, such as: "Expeller of evil", "Catcher of the enemy", and "Don't think, bite!". The bronze dog likely had a similar protective function.

E.3.2.

Metropolitan Museum of Art Online

Origin: Egypt, Ptolemaic Period

Dating: ca. 332-30 BCE.

Collection: MMA, 23.2.68

Length: 3.2 cm

Width: 3.7 cm

Type: Amulet

Breadth: 0.4 cm

Material: Gold

Bibliography:

Allen, J.P. 2005. *The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt.* New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art Publications & Yale University Press.

metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/547767?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=23.2.68&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

Description:

The wedjat eye amulet represents the healed eye of the god Horus, who is associated with a falcon and can be depicted in falcon or human shape, or as a falcon headed man.

The eye features both human and falcon elements. It shows a human eye with a horizontal cosmetic line extend from its outer corner and combines it with the stylized facial markings of a falcon. The latter are reflected in the vertical extension below the pupil and the diagonal line that ends in a spiral. The small triangular markings on the amulet's right side are known from the wedjat eye hieroglyphs of the Ptolemaic Period and it is likely that this amulet dates to this period as well.

The ancient Egyptian name, wedjat, means "the one that is sound (again)". In Egyptian mythology Horus' eye was injured or stolen by the god Seth and then restored by Thoth. The wedjat eye embodies healing power and symbolizes rebirth. An amulet in this shape was thought to protect its wearer and to transfer the power of recovery and regeneration onto him or her. It was a very popular [amulet] and used by the living as well as for the dead.

M.3.2.

Metropolitan Museum of Art Online

Origin: Syria, Tell Brak, Middle Uruk Period.

Dating: ca. 3700-3500 BCE

Collection: MMA, 51.59.11

Length: 6.5 cm

Width: 4.2 cm

Type: Stone-Sculpture, Amulet

Breadth: 0.6 cm

Material: Gypsum Alabaster

Bibliography:

Azara, P. 2003. *La Vista y la Visión, exh. cat.* Valencia: Institut Valencià D'Art Modern.

Rakic, Y. (ed.). 2010. Discovering the Art of the Ancient Near East: Archaeological Excavations Supported by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931-2010. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 68(1): 43.

www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/324155?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=51.59.11&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1

Description:

This type of figurine known as an eye idol, made of stone and having incised eyes, has been excavated at Tell Brak, where thousands were found in a building now called the Eye Temple. They were probably dedicated: these are offerings. Many are incised with multiple sets of eyes, others with jewellery, and still others with representations of "children" - smaller eyes and body carved on the body of the larger idol. Wide eyes demonstrate attentiveness to the gods in much of Mesopotamian art.

E.4.3.

British Museum Online

Origin: Egypt, 19th-18th Dynasty.

Dating: ca. 1350-1250 BCE.

Collection: BM, EA15619
Reg. # 1859,0301.87

Length: 5.28 cm

Width: 3.55 cm

Breadth: 1.72 cm

Type: Amulet

Material: Jasper

Bibliography:

Andrews, C.A.R. 2000. *Egyptian Treasures from the British Museum*. Santa Ana: The Bowers Museum of Cultural Art.

Taylor, J.H. 2010. *Journey through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead.* London: British Museum Press.

www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA15619

Description:

Jasper heart-amulet of Nakhtamun: this amulet is strongly convex on both faces, and inscribed front and back with hieroglyphs from Chapter 30B of the 'Book of the Dead' on behalf of the Royal Scribe and Scribe of the Divine Offerings of all the Gods, Nakhtamun. Typically, the heart is depicted in a stylized fashion, which resembles a pot with handles, and a sharply defined rim rather than the organ in question. The ribbed tube at the top is pierced for suspension. The hieroglyphs on the one side are inlaid with paint.

M.4.3.

British Museum Online

Origin: North Palace, Room S, Door d; Nineveh, Assyria, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian Period

Dating: ca. 645 BCE.

Collection: BM, 30005
Reg. # 1856,0903.1509

Length: 7.3 cm

Width: 2.8 cm

Breadth: 5.6 cm

Type: Figurine, Amulet

Material: Fired Clay

Bibliography:

Barnett, R.D. 1976. *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668-627)*. London: British Museum Press.

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Gadd, C.J. 1922. *Form and Colours; Revue d'Assyriologie vol. 19*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Meissner, B. 1922. *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.

Meissner, B. & Opitz, D. 1940. *Studien zum Bît Hilâni in Nordpalast Assurbanaplis zu Ninive*. Berlin: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften.

www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1856-0903-1509

Description:

Fired clay dog figurine: originally covered with black pigment and inscribed on the left side in cuneiform.

Inscription reads: "Loud is his bark!"

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